Relating flexible work arrangements and work attitudinal outcomes among millennials in Malta:

Implementing Sustainable Flexibility in the Maltese Labour Market.

Eugenia Sammut

Supervised by Prof. Vincent Cassar

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Master of Arts in Management by Research.

Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy University of Malta

September 2022

Abstract

There has been growing awareness on the need for a work-life balance, both globally and nationally. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, it forced the labour market to resort to flexible work arrangements which have frequently been associated with work-life balance and which, in Malta, had been largely experienced by those with care responsibilities only. Flexible work arrangements had been perceived as perks, as 'nice-to-haves', before the pandemic. After the pandemic, they became 'must-haves' with many media outlets portraying them as measures that create positive employee attitudes throughout. Such measures have also been increasingly associated with millennials, who are gradually taking over the labour market, and who are also perceived as being a difficult generation to manage because they value their personal time more than their working time. These are all general assumptions being made by the various stakeholders within the labour market. The situation created a split between employees demanding flexibility in their work and employers being reluctant to offer it because they fear it would give too much control to the workers. Simultaneously, it encouraged certain employers to eagerly start offering more flexibility at work without having the proper guidance on how these should be implemented to ensure that they do not have counter effects on the employees or the company's operations. Essentially, the pandemic rushed a delicate process that shook traditional human resources management practices.

This research study provides better insight on how flexible work arrangements should be offered and implemented sustainably to benefit both the employer and the employees in the long term. It exhibits the relationship between flexible work

arrangements and specific work attitudinal outcomes, them being job satisfaction,

employee engagement, employee well-being, and intention to leave, and illustrates

how this relationship goes through a transition as measures become standard

practices. The research also provides insight on how millennials and non-millennials

perceive flexible work arrangements, establishing that there is minimal difference

between the generations as these measures are important for the entire labour

market, irrespective of age. It further provides better understanding on the struggles

that employers may be facing when managing millennials and the reasons behind

certain attitudes being shown by this generation. Finally, the research study provides a

framework for the sustainable implementation of flexible work arrangements, which is

based on support, trust, and feedback.

Acknowledgements

Immense gratitude goes to my professor, Prof. Vincent Cassar, for his invaluable patience and guidance throughout this research study. I would also like to thank all my friends and family who supported me in these couple of years and who have had to listen, talk, and dream work flexibility while I completed this project.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

1. Introduction

1.1 Section introduction

This research study looks at flexible work arrangements (FWAs) and how these impact work attitudinal outcomes of employees, in particular millennial employees. This first chapter underlines the importance of considering FWAs in modern human resources practices and explores the situation of work flexibility in Malta. It also comments on how the pandemic has fast-tracked the usage and availability of flexibility measures in the Maltese labour market. Next, the chapter takes the reader through the research area, the research aim, the research questions, and finally, the research structure.

1.2 An employees' market

Today's labour market is being referred to as an employee's market. Companies are experiencing a shortage of manpower available that leaves them unable to fill in all their open positions (Bonnici, 2018). In 2021, the Malta Chamber of Commerce (MCC) in collaboration with Vistage Malta published the *Confidence Index Report and Global Comparison* survey results which shows that 77% of employers in Malta experience difficulties in recruitment, both for skilled and unskilled jobs (MCC, 2021). The findings also report that companies are finding it difficult to operate at full capacity and efficiency due to this shortage, and that people are looking for higher salaries than what the companies are offering (MCC, 2021). Although having attractive salaries would undoubtedly improve a company's position in this employee market, not all employers afford to compete financially which drives them to think of other solutions to attract talent. Companies, which now largely no longer have the upper

hand in the recruitment process, are thus feeling the pressure to create a competitive advantage in the labour market and find ways by which they can attract the talent that they need.

Meanwhile, people are prioritising themselves more, and are more confident quitting a job that they are dissatisfied with. This change is being referred to by economists as the Great Resignation and is said to be one of the repercussions COVID-19 has had on the labour market (Sheather and Slattery, 2021), though in reality the pandemic may have only intensified this movement. Amongst other strong factors, many are linking this movement to burnout and people revaluating their work-life balance (WLB) (Ashton, 2021). To try to combat the Great Resignation, companies are now offering more flexibility at work and allowing people to work remotely through the application of flexible work arrangements (FWA). Evidently, the priority of employees has gone beyond salaries, and importance is being given to their WLB and their attitude towards their job as well.

It is important to note that flexibility does not automatically equal WLB. Nor is it a one-fits-all measure that can be implemented or forced on all employees within an organisation. Work flexibility, through FWAs, changes the traditional week and with it, it changes the way people experience work. Job satisfaction, employee engagement, employment well-being, and employee intention to leave are but some key attitudes that may be affected by this change. Meanwhile, individual priorities, generations, and personal commitments are all factors that may influence how employees experience work flexibility differently from each other.

The current labour market requires that employers put the needs of their employees at the forefront and provide a work environment that encourages a balance between their worker's work demands as well as life demands. However, how is this being done? And what are the implications of these measures?

1.3 Malta: Work-life balance or work-family balance?

The Maltese government has been alluding to a work-life balance (WLB) in Malta's workforce for at least the last fifteen years. The Cohesion Policy 2007-2013, subtitled as *Empowering People for More Jobs and a Better Quality of Life*, refers to the need to provide equal opportunities for both men and women to reach a WLB and notes how family-friendly measures have a great influence in achieving this. In 2012, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) released an article that described the NCPE's involvement in the *ESF3.47 – Unlocking the Female Potential* project. The project sought to encourage equal opportunities for WLB of both men and women and highlights the importance for companies to gain knowledge on work flexibility to be able to offer them strategically to their employees. Meanwhile, the Employment Policy 2014 – 2020 mentions the government's plan to work closely with both the private and the public sector to create a more flexible labour market for the Maltese workforce, acknowledging the effects this would have on employee WLB and how these should not be limited to parents. Yet a Eurofound study conducted in 2016 reported that 69% of the respondents in Malta felt that they are frequently too tired after work to perform household duties – a percentage that was higher than the EU average of 59% at the time. 38% of the respondents also expressed that they found it difficult to meet family responsibilities due to work, though this number did indeed

match the EU average at the time (Eurofound, 2022). It is interesting to note that the first percentage pertains to the struggles felt in the life domain, while the latter and more positive one pertains to the struggles around the family domain. This paints quite the accurate picture of Malta, where although talk is heard about the need for WLB frequently, the conversation tends to almost immediately move towards family-friendly measures.

Taking the 2014 – 2020 Employment Policy as an example once again, WLB is only mentioned in conjunction with initiatives to reduce the gender pay gap and in reference to employees with care responsibilities[1], while the concept of work flexibility was similarly introduced as an initiative to encourage female employment and mentioned alongside family-friendly measures in a manner to indicate that work flexibility is almost exclusively family-friendly measures[2]. While clearly only benefiting part of the population, such family-friendly measures have undoubtedly been a much-needed addition to workplace policies as they have given work opportunities to those that previously could not afford to dedicate their time to a career due to care responsibilities, shifting the labour market to a more equal playground.

However, there is another side to the presence of FWAs in the Maltese labour market. In 2010, the Public Administration HR Office (PAHRO) published a report on the usage of family-friendly measures in the public sector and found that 88.2% of those making use of family-friendly measures were in fact women. Importantly, the 11.8% of men making use of family-friendly measures made use of those measures which did not affect their salaries. In fact, most of the male respondents (73.6%) used

---

[1] See pages 77 and 93 of the Employment Policy 2014 – 2020.
[2] See pages 81 – 82 of the Employment Policy 2014 – 2020.

teleworking and flexible working hours to balance their work and family life. Meanwhile, only 24.8% of the female respondents made use of measures which did not affect their salaries, with the rest going for measures that involved absence from work, mainly through parental leave, career breaks, and reduced hours (PAHRO, 2010). In a more recent report, it was found that although the number of men making use of family-friendly measures in the public sector increased in general and also in non-salary altering measures, the number of women making use of them was still predominant (People and Standards Divsion, 2019). The issue that stems from this is that the balance in WLB is not a balance at all for some, and one domain is being sacrificed to make up for the other - at least for women.

In July 2022, a Legal Notice for the Work Life Balance directive, scheduled for official implementation in August 2022, revealed the initial steps the government would be taking towards achieving a healthier workplace for both the private and the public sector. The legal notice was released following the EU's directive referred to as the *Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers* which provided an overview of what EU countries needed to take into consideration when creating local laws on the subject. Once again, the beneficiaries of this policy are clearly limited. Apart from that, the directive does not provide an indication on the minimum and maximum time that an employer may grant certain flexibility measures to the employee, and states that these arrangements may be limited in duration.

There are clearly already some concerns about this directive. Will employers grant short, if at all, flexibility to their employees since the law stipulates that these arrangements can be limited in duration? And most importantly, why is this directive

limiting the concept of WLB and flexibility to parents and carers? When will these measures be extended, by law, to the rest? There seems to be strong reservations about the concept of FWAs, with only very small and limited steps being taken in the Maltese labour market.

The troubling reality is that there has evidently been a limited understanding on the different measures that may enhance one's WLB, coupled with a culture of "women-career-inhibiting measures" (Azzopardi, 2019, p. 4) which are practically becoming counterproductive as they dwarf the potential of women in the labour market and tip, or even obliterate, the balance between their work and life domains. WLB measures - specifically, flexible work arrangements - need to be regarded as measures for all, irrespective of their care responsibilities and beyond social gender constructs, aimed to give people the tools to successfully manage both their lives and their careers without these two domains clashing or becoming a detriment for each other.

1.4 Flexible work arrangements: the situation in Malta

Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) in Malta are evidently not a new concept. Certain measures are part of standard employment practices and regulated by Maltese law. Examples of these include part-time work, shift work, vacation leave, and sick leave[3]. However, as indicated in the previous section, despite the government having been promising further development in workplace flexibility for work-life balance (WLB) for quite a few years, not much has yet been done for the workforce in

---

[3] One can find detailed information of existing flexible work arrangements laws and regulations through the DIER website on https://dier.gov.mt/en/Pages/home.aspx

general, most especially the private sector. While the public sector has had family-friendly policies to follow, the private sector was largely left without guidance and with employers deciding themselves whether to implement these measures, for whom, and how. This is not to say that the private sector has not had any work flexibility. Taking the obvious example of the gaming industry, companies had already established a strong advantage in the labour market to attract talent, not only due to higher salaries but also due to the culture these companies were offering – one that focused on the well-being of employees.

Despite this, there simply was not a strong urgency to focus on this aspect of workforce well-being. An NSO survey carried out in 2019 showed that employees were struggling to put a line between their work and life domain. In this study, it is seen that 64.8% of the time, work hours were decided by employers or clients rather than the employee, a number that exceed the EU average at the time (55.9%) (NSO, 2021). Furthermore, 40% of employed persons, mostly men, said that they would often need to alter their planned working time to meet the demands of their employers or clients of that day, with 29.5% saying that this happened on a weekly basis (NSO, 2021). 45.5% of employed people were also contacted during their leisure time, 12.6% of which stated that they would need to act before their next working day on the work issue (NSO, 2021). Therefore, the spill of the work domain onto the life domain seemed to be a very strong one just up until recently despite the growing awareness of WLB.

Finally, in October 2021, the public sector introduced its very first Remote Working Policy with the aim to attain a better WLB for all employees, thus finally going

beyond the limitations of family-friendly measures. The policy's press conference statement revealed the true trigger behind the long-awaited push towards this practice: the COVID-19 pandemic (DOI, 2021). The pandemic was the push the government needed to put its promises into action.

1.5 COVID-19: A new era?

The first case of the COVID-19 virus was detected in Malta in March 2020 and various measures were put into force by the Maltese government to help control the spread of the virus (FRA, 2020). These measures shook the labour market, as work was forced to be done outside the traditional work parameters.

The pandemic forced businesses to shut down and others to completely revisit the way they operate. FWAs were applied in possibly unprecedented ways, at least in scale. From teleworking, to reduced hours, to unpaid leave, and temporary layoffs – employers resorted to these measures as a form of crisis control. While some employees gained from the change, experiencing more flexibility in their job, and exploring the different parameters they may complete their tasks in, others were hit hard with reduced pay or no pay at all. Work flexibility was not a perk given to working parents and carers or for employee well-being – it was a tool used for companies to survive and it was being experienced very differently across the labour market. Between January and June 2020, a 17% increase in unemployment was recorded when compared to the previous year, and the average hours worked by full-timers decreased by four hours per week (NSO, 2020).

Meanwhile, measures which were commonly attributed to achieving a WLB, such as remote work and flexible hours, were causing distress - also globally. One of

the main reasons for this was the fact that employees were intially forced into taking

up flexible work, rather than having the option of choosing it. Where before work

flexibility was offered to specific people, it became a reality for everyone. Those who

preferred working at the office had to conduct work in an uncomfortable

environment. They had to adapt their social skills to communicate with their

colleagues virtually, and to find space at their home to convert into an office.

Employees working from home during this time had a high sense of insecurity,

increased work-home conflict, and burnout (Da, et al., 2022). Working parents were

now juggling their work, possibly in an unfit home-office, while their children followed

online lessons.

Arguably the strongest factor that had both employers and employees take a

tougher look at work flexibility was the drastic increase in employees forced to work

from home. According to an NSO study, almost one third of the working population in

Malta in March 2020 was in fact working from home –33% as opposed to the 12%

recorded in 2019 (NSO, 2020). The employer was forced to rely on work flexibility to

keep the business going. Telework arrangements were thus made available to many

more employees across the island, irrelevant of their care responsibilities.

This sudden shift questioned the way work was being done before – if

flexibility was used in times of crisis with success, why was it so unpopular before? It

called for a new era that is result-oriented and based on trust and autonomy

(International Labour Organization, 2020).. The pandemic pushing companies to be

flexible with how they do business showed how unprepared most employers were to

welcome this change and forced them to take another look at their practices to retain

employees. It also provided insight on what forced work flexibility can lead to and made both employers and employees understand the full implications of having work flexibility. And finally, the reality of using FWAs revealed that these measures will not, in fact, automatically lead to desired employee and employer outcomes.

The pandemic may have given rise to stronger conversations and more awareness about flexibility and WLB, but evidently local law is still far off. While the Remote Working Policy was an important first step, there is still much more work to be done on work flexibility in Malta. Policy makers need to start looking at the full spectrum of effects work flexibility has on the workplace and workers, and also start viewing WLB through the definition of 'life' not 'family'. COVID-19 finally made us talk about flexibility, but the next step must be to implement FWAs strategically and sustainably.

1.6 The Present study

1.6.1 Research area

The research area for this study, in general terms, is human resources management. The key concepts are work-life balance, flexible work arrangement, work attitudinal outcomes, and generations.

1.6.2 Research aim

The aim of this research is to serve as a contribution to the knowledge and understanding of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) in Malta. The basis for this knowledge will come by establishing whether FWAs improve certain work attitudinal outcomes, namely job satisfaction, employee engagement, employee well-being, and employee intention to leave. The research will delve further in these results to also

establish whether millennial employees experience flexible work arrangements differently from non-millennials. Millennials are being given particular attention since they make up the largest portion of the current labour market. The third step of the research is to present the results to workers and create discussions on how employees perceive these findings. In the process of obtaining these answers in strong and reliable forms, previous studies and literature on the key concepts of the findings will be analysed, presented, and discussed. In sum, this research study seeks to present stakeholders including policy makers, employers, as well as employees, with better knowledge on FWAs to aid in their implementation and usage in the Maltese labour market sustainably and for the long-term.

1.6.3 Research questions

To achieve its aim outlined in the previous section, this research study is set to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): Is there a relationship between Flexible Work Arrangements and important attitudinal outcomes, namely work engagement, job satisfaction, employee well-being, and intention to leave?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): Do millennials accentuate this relationship?

Research Question 3 (RQ3): How do employees explain this relationship?

1.6.4 Research structure

The research study is split into four main sections. The first part of the research is the literature review (Chapter 2), where the researcher presents and critically analyses previous work that has been published on the subject. The literature

review will serve as the basis of the study and will also contribute to the knowledge

and understanding the researcher which will decrease the researcher's bias. The

literature review takes the key concepts introduced in the Research Area (section

1.6.1) and provides a detailed analysis of how these concepts have been presented

and studied by published authors and researchers. Chapter 2 also provides an

overview of the theoretical framework that the study is built on, which will then be

used to interpret the results. Following is Chapter 3, which outlines the research

method. This chapter provides a detailed overview of how the research questions

(RQs) presented in section 1.6.3 were answered. Information includes the procedure

of both the qualitative and quantitative parts of the study, how the data analysis was

performed, the ethical considerations that were put in place, and any methodological

constraints. Results are presented in Chapter 4. This chapter includes statistical results

and analysis as well as thematic analysis. Both the Method and Results chapters have

been split into two sub-sections: Phase 1 and Phase 2. Phase 1 refers to the

quantitative part of the study, and therefore RQ1 and RQ2, while Phase 2 refers to the

qualitative part of the study, and therefore RQ3. Finally, there is the Discussion and

Conclusion, Chapter 5. This final chapter incorporates the literature review discussed

in Chapter 2 and the results presented in Chapter 4 and provides informed

interpretations and implications of the findings. This chapter also provides concluding

remarks on the research study and presents areas for further research.

1.7 Summary

Chapter 1 provides the context of this research study and goes through the

forces that have implored employers as well as the government to consider flexible

work arrangements as standard practices in the labour market. As outlined, Malta went from providing limited flexibility primarily to employees with caring responsibilities, to having various flexibility measures widespread as crisis-control to the pandemic. Though it transformed the labour market into a more flexible and contemporary one, this move was fast-tracked and thus lacked strategies and guidelines to ensure that measures are benefitting both the employer and the employee. This research study will aim to provide a holistic understanding of flexible work arrangements and how they impact employee attitudes, with particular attention to millennials. To achieve this, the research journey comprised four stages: Literature Review, Method, Results, and Discussion and Conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Section introduction

As seen in Chapter 1, the conceptual framework of this study is founded on the understanding that the growing need for work-life balance has created a demand for work flexibility, which in turn influences work attitudinal outcomes. The aim of this chapter is to present a critical review of the literature published on the subject and provide a solid background to the research area. This will allow the researcher to gain and illustrate an unbiased understanding of the research area that will be utilised in the data collection and data analysis for the research questions presented in section 1.6.3.

The first section of this chapter is the introduction explaining the structure. The second section will then focus on WLB and how this concept emerged and developed in the contemporary workforce. The third section will move on to consider work flexibility as a response to the need for WLB and explore the various forms and implementation of these practices. This section will delve in detail on flexible work arrangements and how these are defined, implemented, and experienced differently by employees. The third section will then move onto giving an overview of the theoretical framework and how the theories discussed will be applied to analyse the relationship between FWAs and the named work attitudinal outcomes. The final section will provide a summary of the literature reviewed.

2.2 Work-life balance

2.2.1 Importance and relevance of work-life balance

Awareness on employee well-being as well as research showing how achieving a work-life balance (WLB) affects work attitudinal outcomes (WAOs) (see for example Kalliath and Brough, 2008; Grawitch and Barber, 2010) have called for a change in standard human resources management (HRM) practices, which have predominately been based on traditional work structures and ideas (Ng and Parry, 2016).

The reasons for this are many. First, we look at globalisation and the creation of global companies, which has meant the typical nine to five workdays, the standard work structure in the labour market, were no longer suitable for companies dealing with different time zones, and organisations had to now compete in a much more intense market (Bergen and Bressler, 2019). The liberalisation of financial markets meant the business economy had much more flexibility and opportunities to change its operations. It also meant that organisations could invest in the relocation of production across different countries and have the accessibility of outsourcing various business functions to lower their production costs (Flecker, et al., 2019). This resulted in the significant restructuring of work and employment, and jobs became less secure.

Demographic changes also play a key role in how the labour market has evolved. Taking gender as an example, after the Second World War, more women (who would typically be the primary homemakers at that time) entered the labour market while still predominantly keeping their role as the main caregivers in their family (Kelliher, et al., 2018). The number of families with a single working adult started diminishing and the labour market started seeing more dual-career couples

(Bergen and Bressler, 2019) who would need to keep up with both work and family commitments.

Indeed, the changes in demographics throughout the years are significant when looking at changing attitudes in the labour market. Generations differ from each other: needs and wants change from one generation to another and priorities alter as we see shifts in social trends (Kelliher, et al., 2018). Looking at Malta as an example, one must take into consideration factors such as the change in employed women's educational profile which went from being predominantly secondary level to tertiary and thus women started earning higher salaries (refer to NSO's report: Trends in Malta, 2016). Such factors altered gender roles in work and society that were prevalent in previous generations. Despite this, Galvez et al. (2011) argue that the implementation of certain measures at the workplace to combat work-life conflict reinforce gender segregation and create a clear difference between the work experience of men and women. Galvez, et al. (2011) use the example of telework and reduced working hours to explain how women, who are still regarded as the ideal carers, take up these measures and by doing so, do not exhibit the characteristics of an ideal worker, which are centred around presence and dedication. In fact, Konrad and Young (2012) mention that many employees worry that measures made available by organisations to combat work-life conflict might in reality limit their careers, so rather than balancing the two domains, WLB measures can be perceived as damaging the work domain and they therefore become counter-productive.

Technological advancements have also been integral for this shift. As Kreiner et al. (2009, p. 704) explain, "today, technology has brought profound changes to the

ways people work, with boundaryless organisations, virtual workspaces, and the potential for constant wireless connection to one's work". This is the new reality, with an on-call 24/7 culture (Bergen and Bressler, 2019) – a seemingly exhausting one where people are reachable through their smartphones, at all hours via emails, social media, and other communications technology. These gadgets are also highly addictive, and which may result in employees ignoring important responsibilities in both their professional and personal lives (Bergen and Bressler, 2019). While this puts technology in unattractive light when considering one's WLB, Galvez, et al. (2011), argue that organisations have also sought to use the flexibility and advanced technology to help their employees reach a WLB through practices such as remote working, where jobs can be done outside of the office. Holland and Bardoel (2016) refer to these two perspectives as the smart and the dark side of technology and note how advancements in technology can be both advantageous and damaging to an organisation's HRM.

These are just some of the reasons why it is important that policies and organisation cultures adapt to the contemporary workforce. The workforce has changed, and so must the way we perceive work and employees' lives if we are to work towards a greater WLB culture for the workforce.

2.2.2 Explaining work-life balance

Field and Chan (2018) put WLB in three main categories: [1] the positive side of the work/life interface, linked to the role accumulation theory; [2] the negative side of the work/life interface, linked to the strain theory; [3] and the blurred boundaries of the work/life interface, explored through the boundary and border theories.

The role accumulation theory asserts that having more than one role increases an individual's sense of fulfilment and well-being, and that one's development and progress in one role improves one's performance in other roles (Field and Chan, 2018) thus creating a positive interface of work/life. This means that there is a good spill-over or "carry-over" (Kalliath and Brough, 2008, p.324) among the roles which create greater enthusiasm and engagement in the two domains (Powell and Greenhaus, 2003; Paustian-Underdahl, et al., 2016) and the possibility of the life role enriching the work role of an individual and vice-versa (Field and Chan, 2018). To give an example of this scenario, this could be an individual whose tasks are not directly related to ICT but whose pastimes and interests have given them knowledge on ICT that they would gladly apply at the workplace on their own initiative to enhance their performance (life-work carry over). Similarly, a person whose job demands organisation, attention to detail, and high-level planning might see that they are applying these practices in their daily life as well (work-life carry over).

The strain theory in contrast maintains that multiple roles lead to time, energy and attention strains that affect the presence of individuals in the different roles due to the conflicting demands needed to fulfil them (Field and Chan, 2018). Grawitch, et al. (2010) build on this by integrating the COR (conservation of resource) theory with the control theory in relation to the work/life interface. They argue that since personal resources are finite, individuals are more likely to use their resources on personal pursuits rather than on required demands and when doing the latter, they are doing this to avoid feared outcomes. An example here would be an individual spending more time at work, and thus using up personal resources, out of fear of losing their job, which puts a strain on their family or social life.

18

The Boundary and the Border theories in turn relate on how work and life domains are perceived and managed by the individuals. The boundary theory focuses on what roles people assign to work and life while the border theory also encompasses psychological and tangible factors that distinguish the two domains (Field and Chan, 2018). The focus is then on how individuals manage to perform their role in the domains and also transition between them without creating conflict. The ease of transitions depends on the individuals and what they associate work and life with and the borders between them (Clark, 2000). In this way, achieving a WLB might mean keeping the domains separate to some but integrated to others.

Essentially, these three theories show how the work and life domains can have a positive and negative spill-over on each other and that the blurred lines between the domains that may occur are not necessarily a disadvantage for everyone. This evaluation supports the criticism on initial research of WLB, which accuses earlier works on WLB as having a narrow view on what the concept is and on not being truly relevant to the contemporary workforce (see for example: Eikhof, et al., 2007; Kelliher, et al., 2018; DeSimone, 2020) as studies have been restrictive in how they understand work, life, and balance.

As Kelliher, et al. (2018) explain, most academic work on WLB has viewed *life* centred predominantly from the traditional perspective of the structure at the workplace. Grawith and Barber (2010) sustain this and argue that some studies which have sought to define work-life balance are problematic as they tend to aggregate the measures that employees need to achieve a balance between their work and life domains, and in doing so look at employees with specific marital and parental

statuses. While it is important to look at those with caring responsibilities and those

working within the traditional parameters of work, we must also take into

consideration how the workforce has developed over the years (Kelliher, et al., 2018)

and considering, for example, those who have WLB concerns without dependent

children. The NSO report Trends in Malta (2016) in fact shows that women under 30 in

Malta are having fewer children when compared to the late 20th century which

means that the link between WLB and working mothers might not be as central as it

once was. As mentioned previously in Chapter 1, WLB should not simply be a way to

juggle responsibilities at work and responsibilities at home. WLB is also for those who

simply "desire balance for non-work activities such as sports, study, and travel"

(Kalliath and Brough, 2008, p.323) and should not be focusing on working women

trying to "tip the balance in favour of work" (Eikhof, et al., 2007, p. 329). Similarly, the

work part in WLB has also developed and changed in post-industrial economies in the

last decade (Field and Chan, 2018), yet the changes that this has brought within the

structure of work and employment have been largely ignored in WLB research

(Kelliher, et al., 2018).

It is therefore important that we keep an expanded perception of WLB

(DeSimone, 2020) in research and that we do not make assumptions on what work

and life might mean to the different individuals (MacDermid, 2005; Eikhof, et al.,

2007) and contribute to a more holistic study of WLB that organisations and policy

makers can refer to.

2.2.3 Implementation of work-life balance initiatives

As Grawitch and Barber (2010) highlight, literature on the ways to achieve WLB has primarily focused on combined measures which meant that most scholars were not looking at them at an individual level and determining their specific impact on WLB. In this way, studies which combine WLB measures and link them to certain outcomes are essentially giving the same weight to different practices even though some practices may work better (or less) than others. They go on to recognise two possible categories of WLB initiatives: those which fall under work flexibility, and those which fall under nonwork support.

Work flexibility initiatives are those which aim to give employees more autonomy in how they perform their job: flexibility in where they work (through telework for example); how they work (such as part-time or reduced hour contracts); and, when they work (such as flexitime). In this way, Grawitch and Barber argue that although the resources that need to be allocated to work are not reduced, employees can manage their personal resources better. IN this way, the employees become more able to adjust their work according to their personal needs and are also able to reduce the presence of conflict (Voydanoff, 2005).

Nonwork support practices in turn aim to assist employees to manage their life domain better. Such initiatives include financial support (such as vouchers and discounts from certain outlets); paid leave (maternity and paternity leave and vacation leave, for instance); and childcare benefits (such as an allowance to cover childcare costs or even childcare service in the office building). Through these initiatives, employees are given more resources in their life domain which would mean that there

21

is less of the life-work spill over. Furthermore, such benefits are also integral to the organisation's attractiveness, recruitment, and retention (Grawitch and Barber, 2010).

Through their study, Grawitch and Barber found that work flexibility initiatives contributed to more positive outcomes than nonwork support. This may be because nonwork support does not reduce work demands. It is also argued however that some initiatives organisations implement in response to the demand for WLB, such as FWAs, are often the cause of work-life conflict as they obscure the boundaries between the work and life domains and can lead to negative work outcomes and impact employee well-being (Bergen and Bressler, 2019). These contradictory findings support Grawitch and Barber in their argument on the need for organisations to have inclusive policies on WLB as employee work and nonwork demands differ on an individual basis and measures do not lead to the same outcomes for all employees.

There are various policies and practices that can be put in place to help employees attain a WLB, though; the possibilities are many and are not limited to certain policies for certain demographics. In 2019, the European Commission published the twenty (20) best work-life balance practices adopted by EU member states. These actions included investing in family-friendly measures to assist parents in juggling their work and life domains through initiatives such as childcare services and guidance workshops (adopted by Czech Republic; Ireland; France; Italy; Lithuania; Hungary); Encouraging female employment in the labour market through initiatives such as telework for young mothers as well as training and promoting gender-equality in the work and life domains (adopted by Germany; Spain; Lithuania; Romania; Sweden; United Kingdom); Recognising the need to implement new human resources

management solutions to attract and retain talent and also observe improved work attitudinal outcomes (adopted by Austria and Italy); and investing in employee development and training to give their workforce the opportunity to have more control over their careers and stimulate them to progress onto a position that works better for their work-life balance (adopted by Germany; Spain; Lithuania; Romania; Sweden; United Kingdom).

Indeed, European countries are often referenced in literature for their take on a more WLB-friendly workplace (see for example Bergen and Bressler, 2019; Grawitch and Barber, 2010; Baral and Bhargava, 2011; Sturges and Guest, 2004;). For instance, some countries have responded to the right to disconnect movement such as in Germany where they have policies in place to eliminate work related communication after office hours, and e-mails sent while workers are on vacation advise the sender that the person is out of the office and that the email will be deleted (The Guardian, 2018). While hope that Malta will soon be following in these steps through the EU Work-Life Balance directive, issues may still arise with the employers' mentality on the subject. A study carried out on telework and remote work arrangements showed that employers are reluctant to keep these measures available in situations when they are not necessary (MEA, 2020) – that is, when the company's operations do not depend on them, and the company is not the direct beneficiary of the measure. Furthermore, the National Employment Policy 2021-2030 illustrates how, before the pandemic, Malta was one of the lowest ranking countries in the EU that utilised remote working and went on to estimate the potential it has to allow this measure. The figures show that Malta's potential in this regard is higher than the European average, due to the vast presence of industries which allow remote work such as the financial and gaming

sectors. Yet the potential can only be reached if employers allow this measure to become part of the work culture.

It is also important to see how this potential is used, however. Eikhof, et al., (2007) argue that measures such FWAs are masked as employee-friendly measures when in fact they are implemented to benefit the organisation, first and foremost. They argue that today's 24/7 economy requires organisations to move away from the traditional workday and have employees working round the clock in the global market. This can also be applied to slight changes in the workdays; for example, an evening educational institution that has lectures starting at 5:30pm might prefer having the administrative staff finishing their workday at 6:00pm (or later) in case assistance is needed at the start of the sessions, rather than employing an evening receptionist. Here, the company can give the office workers the liberty of choosing when they start their workday – whether at 10am or later – but this flexibility would ultimately still be according to the organisation's needs and preferences. Other measures that are more employee-centred and perhaps more expensive to invest in are, in turn, less popular (Eikhof, et al., 2007). Indeed, a study focusing on working mothers in Malta revealed that women in the private sector who returned to work after their maternity leave felt they received very little support from their employers overall. The fact that employers have the right to refuse or postpone paternal-related leave requests if they see that they would interfere with the organisation's performance does not help (Spiteri and Xuereb, 2012).

We must therefore take a hard look at what WLB initiatives are being implemented at the workplace and how effective they truly are. Part of Malta's

Employment Policy (2014) directs focus on the need to allow more work flexibility in the country's labour market and recommends measures such as childcare facilities, family-friendly measure, and FWAs to be put in place in both the private and the public sector. These measures are meant not simply for the benefit of the employer but also of the company through increased employee satisfaction and retention. However, the accuracy of this needs to be challenged and this study aims to provide better knowledge for policy makers to use when trying to combat the work-life conflict by looking at the one specific initiative: work flexibility.

2.3.1 Work flexibility and flexible work arrangements

Flexibility at work can be implemented and experienced in several ways. In the time since companies started giving their employees options for a more flexible work schedule, the concept of work flexibility has developed and broadened considerably to what it is today. According to Choudhary (2016) work flexibility can be categorised in

Criterion of Flexibility in work schedules	Examples
Flexibility in the Timing of Work *Definition:* Flexibility in when work occurs	• Flexitime • Core Days • Results-Based Professional Work • Contingent Work • Rotating Shifts • Shift Work • Four Day Work Week • Compressed Work Week • Weekend, Evening, Night Work
Flexibility in the Location or Place of Work *Definition:* Flexibility in the location or place of where work occurs	• Telework or Flex place Satellite Offices, Neighbourhood Work Centres • Required Travel or Client Office work • Split Locations • Informal Telework combined with Nonstandard Working Time
Flexibility in Amount of work (Reduced Workload and Hours) *Definition:* Flexibility in the amount of work or workload	• Job Sharing • Reduced Load or Customized Work • Part-Time Work • Temporary Layoffs • Temporary Shutdown • Required Reduced or Part-Time Hours • Overtime Mandates or Limits • Reduced Hours • Phased Retirement • Work-Study or Coops
Flexibility in Work Continuity (Short-Term Breaks in Employment or Time Off) *Definition:* Flexibility to allow for employment breaks or time off	• Short-Term or Long-Term Leaves (e.g., educational, travel, family, maternity, disability, military) • Sabbaticals • Extended or Indefinite Paid and Unpaid Leaves of Absence • Vacation • Sick Time or Disability Time Off • Part Year Work • Intermittent Leave

Table 1 Criterion of Flexible Work Schedules (source: Choudhary, 2016)

four distinct forms, each having a set of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) that can be implemented by the organisation. These are illustrated in Table 1 and then discussed in the subsections to follow.

2.3.1.1 Flexibility in the timing of work

Work-time flexibility is commonly referred to as scheduled flexibility (Hill, et al., 2008) and allows employees to perform their duties outside the nine-to-five bracket[4]. Scheduled flexibility may be implemented through both formal and informal measures. Formal measures include organisation policies such as *flextime*, and informal measures include agreements established within a team (Carlson, et al., 2010) which are then not official.

There are conflicting thoughts on how schedule flexibility is experienced by employees. Moen et al. (2011) argue that having control on one's time schedule can improve well-being and health behaviour as such initiatives break away from time "cages" (Sennett, 1998, p. 32) that rigidly establish what worktime and non-worktime is. Other studies however challenge this and link work-time flexibility to work intensification (see for reference Kelliher and Anderson, 2009; Pedersen and Jeppesen, 2012; Fein, et al., 2017) which may result in increased job strain. It is also suggested that the lack of a rigid schedule may eliminate the boundary between life and work resulting in work/life spill over (Pedersen and Jeppesen, 2012). This is a recurring theme in work flexibility – much like what was discussed in the previous section on WLB.

---

[4] Referring to typical workdays which start at 9:00 and end at 17:00, Monday to Friday.

In the European Working Conditions Surveys (2017), Malta ranked very high when it comes to long working hours and regularity of work schedules[5] which means that predominately people are doing long rigid hours at work. A more recent study also illustrates that the average working week in Malta increased from 38.7 hours per week in 2012 to 39.6 in 2020. (Eurostat, 2021). As seen in Chapter 1, in most cases it is the company that establishes them, rather than the employee, which puts into question the amount and quality of work-time flexibility that the Maltese workforce has. Limited data has been published on scheduled flexibility in Malta, most of which is found in studies and statistics relating to general work flexibility, not specific to time. Maltese legislation has also largely kept quiet, focusing mainly on other forms of work flexibility. The National Employment Policy (2014) recognises the need for work-time flexibility and makes mention to compressed work weeks, flexible hours, and term-time work. However, it does not offer changes in legislation or policies to have these implemented nation-wide, and only gives suggestions that the public and private sector should follow and the promise of future conversations on the issue. The subsequent National Employment Policy (2021) also does not offer much regulation.

A shorter work week is commonly brought up by politicians in EU states when talking about work conditions and WLB. This initiative has been viewed as a new way of working and has been given a lot of attention on the media in recent years (ADP, 2019). There are several things that need to be considered if implemented though – for example, would employees in this case be working the same hours but distributed

---

[5] The report states "the average number of long working days varies significantly by country: it is very high in Turkey (4.6 days a month [and] Malta (4.2)" especially when compared to other countries such as Greece (3.1) and Finland (3.0). The report also states that 75% of EU workers work the same number of days every week and 63% work the same number of hours every week. 61% of all workers report having fixed starting and finishing times (Eurofound, 2017).

among fewer days? The ADP (2019) report shows that most EU workers (78%) would opt for working longer but fewer days and earn the same salary, rather than having less hours with fewer pay. But one must also look at organisations and their perspective. France's 35-hour week reform was initially widely criticised by employers as being an "attack on business" (Hayden, 2006 p.528) and needed a series of negotiations and government aids to be accepted and implemented by the private sector. However, despite the initial criticism on this initiative, the 35-hour week resulted in minimal financial sacrifice from the private sector and contributed to better life quality for the employees (Hayden, 2006). Iceland had the biggest two trial of the four-day work week which involved public sector workers between 2015 and 2019 and which saw an increase in employee well-being. More recently in 2022, the United Kingdom launched a trail of its own, with workers coming from large corporate companies to smaller scale restaurants working a four-day week that did not involve any loss in salary.

Indeed, it is possible that a shorter work week and reduced work hours may in fact have no impact on company costs in certain cases and thus can be implemented even without government aids and without affecting salaries. This can be done through result-based work which is work focused on productivity rather than on working time. Studies indeed indicate that workers may be more productive and engaged with shorter hours as long hours result in fatigue (Collewet and Sauermann, 2017) which implies that the same level of productivity is going to be given whether it is a six-hour day or an eight, for example. The social exchange relationship theory also comes into play here, as employees may feel inclined to be more productive in return for the autonomy given over their work schedule (Kelliher and Anderson, 2009).

28

This initiative cannot be applied in all cases, especially those companies in the tourism industry retail that run 24/7. However, other measures such as compressed work weeks and rotating shifts may be considered in these cases.

2.3.1.2 Flexibility in the location or place of work

Flexibility in where a job is performed is when employees can work outside the regular worksite (Idris, 2014). This form of flexibility requires technology and telecommunication systems to work as employees must be connected to the organisation virtually (Hill, et al., 2008). Common implementation of this is through telework, where employees can choose where to work and they would usually choose their homes as a virtual office (Hill, et al., 2008). There is also what is known as activity-based working (ABW) which is a concept that allows employees to adapt their working environment according to their tasks (Haynes, et al., 2019).

Haynes et al. (2019) classify the worker into three main categories: [1] the Low-level mobility worker, who is an employee who is predominantly in the same place in the office during his working time; [2] the Medium-level mobility worker, who is typically an employee who works in different working environments that could be within the office and outside; and the [3] High-level mobility worker, who is typically an employee who is predominantly outside the office and does most of his work virtually and may occasionally visit the office.

The medium-level and high-level mobility workers are the ones that make use of location-based FWAs. As Choudhary (2016) illustrates, such measures can include business trips, split locations, and client office work. Furthermore, there can also be location-flexibility within the office itself, with employees having different options for

where they can carry out their work (Haynes, 2011) such as board rooms, shared spaces, and work booths.

The National Employment Policy (2014) identified telework as one of the most commonly adopted measures in Malta[6] and the subsequent National Employment Policy (2021) links it to attraction and retention of talent in the private sector. Greenhill and Wilson (2006) also attribute various benefits that stem from telework. These include the ability for those with care responsibilities to be able to work while still taking care of their family at home; persons with disabilities who are tied to their homes being able to join the workforce; and reduced commuting and increased leisure time. However, they also highlight how the work and life domain may invade each other through telework and create threats rather than advantages in both these realms. Apart from this, telework also impacts social relations, especially for the high-level mobility workers. Pyoria (2011) argues that unless organisations make the effort to organise frequent meetings and get-togethers, those employees who telework risk alienation from the work community, which may affect their well-being and may also reduce their possibility of career advancements. Not to mention the added daily costs that might incur when one is expected to work away from the office – increased water and electricity bills, increased beverage consumption from home (or a café, for example), possible investment in better internet bandwidth and purchasing of other equipment.

---

[6] Other measures mentioned were reduced hours and flexible hours.

2.3.1.3 Flexibility in the amount of work

To support workers as they juggle between their work and life domains, alternatives to the standard 40-hour week were introduced in the labour market such as part-time work, or reduced hours (Hill, et al., 2008). Part-time work has usually been associated with low-level jobs and fewer career opportunities when compared to full-time work (Barnett and Hall, 2001) but this has changed and employees in high-level jobs may also be offered the flexibility of having part-time commitments while retaining their roles (Hill, et al., 2008). Similarly, job-sharing is a form of employment whereby two to three people share a 40-hour contract and salary between them (Idris, 2014) thus working part-time but collectively doing the work of a full-timer. Barnett and Hall (2001) argue that offering reduced hours is key to attract and retain talent within the company. It also positively affects employee well-being since it reduces stress and fatigue gained through high workloads. However, Boyce et al. (2007) claim that reduced work may create tension at the workplace between full-timers and part-timers or temporary workers as the former may have a tendency to look down at the latter since they are not spending as many hours as them at work. Russo (2012) also notes that an important factor to consider is whether the employees that are on a reduced hour contract want to be in this situation and are not in fact doing it for external factors (such as needing to make time for nonwork demands or having the company impose it on them to cut costs) as this affect the level of job satisfaction that these employees experience. Other forms of workload flexibility can be through paid overtime and secondary employment where employees can decide to earn more money through other employment options outside the 40-hour contract, such as seasonal, casual, and temporary work.

2.3.1.4 Flexibility in work continuity

Ways by which employees can take leave and time off has also developed and become more flexible throughout the years. Paid leave in the EU is a guaranteed right and employees have a minimum of four weeks of paid leave as well as an allowance for paid sick leave[7]. However, EU states and companies may choose to provide more than the minimum required by legislation. For instance, companies in Spain cannot allow less than thirty (30) days of paid leave in their contracts and employees are also entitled for more paid leave for certain circumstances such as marriage and pregnancy/maternity needs (EURES, 2020). In Sweden, parents have a combined total of four-hundred and eighty (480) hours in paid paternity leave, amounting to sixty (60) days (European Commission). Paid study-leave and sabbaticals are among other forms of work continuity flexibility that companies may offer to their employees. For instance, after being engaged for a certain number of years, academic staff at the University of Malta may apply for a year-long sabbatical which is fully paid and used for professional development or to partake in academic research and related activities (European Commission, 2019). Various research conducted on the experience of employees making use of these measures report positive results. For example, Earle, et al. (2011) found that paternal leave benefits brought about various health benefits for the employees and their families while Galinsky, et al. (2011) found that the availability of these measures improved engagement, job satisfaction and retention.

Leave programmes and time-off benefits may be implemented through both paid and unpaid measures yet despite their availability, they are in fact underused

---

[7] As per Directive 2003/88/EC or Working Time Directive

(Mulvaney, 2014). According to Newman and Mathews (1999), this is due to four main factors: [1] attitude of management; [2] lack of trust; [3] workaholic culture; and [4] limited communication and training.

Mulvenay (2014) also shows that these measures may create significant negative effects prior to their consumption (as employees prepare for their absence at work) and also after (as employees re-join the office and their work routine).

2.3.2 Theoretical framework

The literature reviewed and presented in the previous sections has led to the conception of a theoretical framework that will be explained in the following subsection. These theories will serve as a backdrop for the research and will aid in the understanding and discussion of the results obtained to answer the research questions.

2.3.2.1 Job autonomy

Providing employees with a degree of job autonomy, and thus increased work flexibility, may be the solution needed for companies to reduce the negative outcomes job demands create in the workplace (Yucel, 2019). There is substantial literature which illustrates how job autonomy may enhance positive work outcomes such as job satisfaction, well-being, and turnover intention (see for example: Yucel, 2019; Galletta, et al., 2011; Camerino and Sarquis, 2010; Humphrey, et al., 2007).

Kubicek, et al. (2017) attribute this to two main theoretical thoughts; [1] the Job Demand-Control model (JD-C), conceptualised by Karasek (1979) and [2] the Job Demands-Resources mode (JD-R), conceptualised by Demerouti, et al. (2001). JD-C considers jobs to comprise two important elements: job demands and job control. Job

demands refers to the workload, while job control is the autonomy employees possess to complete their tasks. The theory assumes that job demands increase job strain, and job control allows employees to manage the demands and reduce the strain. By doing this, employees may focus better on their tasks and increase their competencies (Kubicek, et al., 2017).

Meanwhile, JD-R considers jobs as comprising two *different* important elements: job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to the efforts that employees need to put into a job. These can be of a physical, emotional, psychological, and cognitive nature and, for instance, may include workload, workplace environment, interactions with colleagues and clients. Job resources are physical, psychological, social, or organisational elements in a job that [1] help employees achieve their goals, [2] minimise job demands, and/or [3] lead to personal growth and progress (Kubicek, et al., 2017).

Both models sustain that through work flexibility and job autonomy, employees will not only reduce job strain and stress, but will also be able to focus more on self-development and become better at the job. While the JD-C model focuses solely on job autonomy, JD-R considers various measures (resources), including job autonomy, that may lead to the desired outcomes.

There are two factors that need to be taken into consideration here. First, some studies suggest that too much job autonomy may indeed be detrimental to the employee and may not create the desired work outcomes (Kubicek, et al., 2017; Kain and Jex, 2010). Reasons for this include increased time pressure (for instance if an individual is exercising work-time flexibility), or decreased support and interaction

from superiors (can occur when an individual is exercising workplace flexibility), (Kubicek, et al., 2017). Further considerations include increased task insecurity (that may be a product of decreased support), which leads to increased burnout and stress (Wieland, et al., 2004 in Kubicek et al., 2017). Is JD-C therefore giving too much prominence to job autonomy without considering the consequences, perhaps? Second, that work flexibility and flexible work arrangements do not always equal job autonomy. As, Klindzic and Maric (2017) illustrate, FWAs can be categorised into two: [1] employee-driven and [2] employer-driven measures – and FWAs which are implemented by the employer without giving a voice and choice to the employee may result in negative attitudinal outcomes due to the lack of autonomy involved. It is important to distinguish between work flexibility and job autonomy as one does not necessarily represent the presence of the other. The *resources* in JD-R may in fact work against both the employee and employer if an organisation considers enforced work flexibility as a positive resource for its employee to use.

Importantly, improved work attitudinal outcomes through job autonomy may depend on different factors, including employee and job characteristics (Kubicek, et al., 2017). For instance, employees may regard job autonomy differently from others and while it may have positive results for employees who have a high need for autonomy, job autonomy may be demotivating to others who need structure in the workplace (Yperen, et al., 2014). Furthermore, Twenge (2010) also looks at generations and how the need for autonomy has changed as different generations enter the workforce. Studies have also found that those with a high need for job autonomy are more likely to be motivated intrinsically (Park and Jang, 2015) and supervisors must keep in mind the different psychological needs of their employees

when implementing such measures (Kubicek, et al., 2017). Similarly, job characteristics may also differ the extent to which job autonomy should be implemented. For example, job autonomy may cause ambiguity and increased job stress through increase time-pressure as employees have more responsibilities to regulate their work (Kubicek, et al., 2017). And in their study, Yperen, et al. (2014) found that leaders that worked more hours than non-leaders per week required more autonomy and less structure in their job. This makes the level of job autonomy offered quite delicate: on one hand, we see that those in leadership roles are in more need for job autonomy, yet on the other we have the possible downfall of already busy employees being given the added responsibility of regulating their jobs.

2.3.2.2 Alienation at the workplace

Alienation has been a widely discussed and debated topic, especially in the twentieth century, and Marx's theory on the subject played an important role in these conversations (Musto, 2010). Simplified, Marx's theory compromises of four main drivers of alienation in the capitalist society: [1] Product alienation which is when the worker is alienated from what he is producing as the production is for the employer, an alien object, not himself; [2] Activity alienation, when the activity is alienating for the worker as it does not develop creativity or voluntary involvement so there is a lack of control and say on how the labour process is done and workers are not given power on their work actions; [3] Species alienation that sees workers through their work only and have become the personification of the capitalist world; and [4] Social alienation, where through the previous three kinds of alienation, workers are also alienated from each other (Edgell and Granter, 2020).

Amongst other theorists, Blauner (1964) sought to develop Marx's theory of alienation. He wanted to show how the different forms of alienation varied depending on the work conditions within an organisation. Blauner redefined the concept of alienation and identified four dimensions of workplace alienation. [1] Powerlessness, through employees' lack of control and ownership over the quantity and quality of their tasks; [2] Meaninglessness, through employees' lack of understanding of the job and the reasoning behind the operations; [3] Social alienation, through the development of urbanisation and industrialization that created a lack of belonging and limited social interaction; and [3] Self-estrangement, through employees' self-alienation form their work because of the lack of involvement.

In his research, Blauner found that the most important factor that altered the presence of alienation at the workplace is technology as it changes the nature of the work and how it is performed, and also suggested that a solution to counter alienation included looking at the quality and quantity of leisure time for employees (Edgell and Granter, 2020). Though his work measuring alienation was strongly criticised by other theorists (by for example, Eldridge, 1971; Gallie, 1978; Hill, 1981), the framework may still be applied in the contemporary workplace to understand better how alienation affects employees (O'Donohue and Nelson, 2014).

More recently, O'Donohue and Nelson (2014) identified different reasons as to why employees may feel alienated at the modern workplace, including the restructuring and redesigning of work and employment. For instance, they argue that the needs for employees on non-traditional contracts (such as part-time or casual) may be more easily dismissed and that these employees may suffer from reduced

career opportunities and lower levels of well-being. O'Donohue and Nelson (2014) attribute the root of workplace alienation to the need for the individual's freedom and the need for the organisation's control thus arguably putting work flexibility and FWAs at the core of the matter. The issue of power/control in FWAs is in line with Blauner's (1964) powerlessness dimension but FWAs can also be considered when looking at the other dimensions. For example, O'Donohue and Nelson (2014) explain how work that is completed with little or no contact with colleagues (such as the case of telework or in some cases, flexitime) may lead to social isolation since the individual is not working within a team. In addition, they explain that meaninglessness may be tied to job autonomy as if employees are not allowed creativity nor autonomy on assigned tasks, they will thus not be able to understand the meaning of the work and are rendered alienated from it.

Importantly, eliminating or reducing alienation at work is not only beneficial for the employees but also the organisation. Khan et al. (2019) argue that work alienation may result in emotional exhaustion which in turn creates negative work attitudinal outcomes as employees do not have the mental strength to deal with their jobs. Khan, et al. (2019) refer to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and maintain that if employees do not have the necessary resources to counter job demands, they are left with job strain, burnout, and destructive performance outcomes. Furthermore, Golden and Veiga (2015) found that alienation through self-estrangement (that is, the separation from the self and the work environment – Blauner's (1964) fourth dimension) may decrease the quality of the exchange relationships assumed by the social exchange theory and one of the main reasons for this was the lack of trust that alienation created amongst the employees. Kozhina and

Vinokurov (2020) also point out that employees may, intentionally or unintentionally, increase workplace alienation when given the autonomy to choose their work schedule and place as in doing so they may reduce the amount of interaction that they have with their colleague. Slightly similar to Blauner (1964), Kozhina and Vinokurov (2020) also identify technology as one of the main drivers for work alienation and maintain that the increased use of technology reduces the quality of interactions within the workplace thus causing employees to feel left out or unsupported.

The presence or awareness of workplace alienation increased drastically due to the COVID-19 pandemic as businesses had to close due to local government directives. In their study on how the pandemic affected alienation at the workplace, Kozhina and Vinokurov (2020) make a distinction between voluntary and involuntary workplace distancing. The former is employees agreeing to work remotely (telework) while the latter is employees having no choice but to work remotely (isolation) – in this case, because of the pandemic – and they argue that isolation is what creates workplace alienation through increased job demands and stress. This once again ties to employee-driven and employer-driven FWAs and the importance of giving a choice to the employee for FWAs to result in positive work outcomes.

2.3.2.3 Social exchange theory

The concept of the Social Exchange Theory (SET) has been highly influential in research for decades. It can indeed be traced back to the 1920s and has been studied and analysed through the lenses of various disciplines (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). As Blau (1964, p.91) defines it, SET is about the "voluntary actions of individuals

that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact

bring from others". Though SET has evolved since its inception, the concept is still

centred around Blau's view that interactions lead to obligations (Emerson, 1979).

At the workplace, SET (referred to as *social exchange relationships* in this

context (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005) is used to illustrate how organisations may

improve work attitudinal outcomes if they offer their employees different financial or

non-financial incentives (Caillier, 2016). Flexible work arrangements are an example of

such incentives as employees may be inclined to give more to an organisation that is

helping them reach a work-life balance (Klindzic and Maric, 2017; Berkery, et al.,

2017). There have indeed been various studies to sustain this. In their study on

employee-driven and employer-driven FWAs, Klindzic and Maric (2017) found that

work attitudinal outcomes through the two kinds of FWAs depended on employee

preferences but that a prominent driver of positive outcomes was the fact that

employees were more inclined to give back to organisations which give them the

option of FWAs. Azar, et al. (2018) found that FWAs led to lower turnover intentions

and attribute the result partly to SET, basing this on the thought that "you should give

benefits to those who give you benefits" (p.139). Therefore, employees are more

inclined to stay with an organisation that they feel is supporting them beyond the

basic components of a work environment, creating the exchange in SET. However, not

all FWAs will create the psychological commitment that SET promotes in employees

(Berkery, et al., 2017). As mentioned with job autonomy, FWAs which are enforced on

the employees and are more employer-driven may in fact create the opposite effect:

such FWAs may create more tension and job strain on employees which may make

them feel like they are not supported by their employers and thus employees will be inclined to give less back (Berkery, et al., 2017).

Caillier (2016) identifies three integral components that make SET successful: [1] the voluntary act of good will by the employer to support the employee, [2] the bond and respect between the employer and employee, and [3] the obligation the employee feels to return the act of good will. The general understanding of SET is that if [1] is provided, [3] will be given in return. Yet [2] is an essential part in this exchange (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005; Gould-Williams and Davies, 2005). This is especially true when it comes to FWAs which, as we have seen, sometimes require the employees to be exercising job autonomy and have a less structured workday and thus require management to trust their employees to complete their tasks with less supervision than usual. Furthermore, management must be able to support its employees virtually as well, so employees making use of FWAs do not feel left out or that they are hurting their chances of career advancements by not being present all the time in the traditional way (Bontrager and Clinton, 2021). Apart from that, management must support the initial part of the exchange: the voluntary act of good will by the employer to support the employee. Thus, the availability of FWAs should be defined as the extent to which employees feel they can take up FWAs. This is because the tools may be available to employees, but the lack of employer support may keep them from making use of the measures (Bontrager and Clinton, 2021), which would then not lead to employees feeling a sense of obligation and the corresponding positive outcomes.

2.3.3.4 Section remarks

The theories presented in this section shed light on several factors that need to be considered when looking at the implementation of flexible work arrangements (FWA). Indeed, they challenge certain assumptions on the subject, and it is thus important to view them together, rather than separately, to further build an unbiased understanding of how FWAs affect employees.

One of the main reasons for the need of work-life balance (WLB) is job strain. As mentioned, the changing of organizations and work structures through globalisation added much pressure on employees which made jobs and roles in both work and life challenging to manage. A common comment in research has been that offering employees flexibility at work may help resolve the issue of competing domains. However, there are also arguments presented which proposes the opposite effect, for example in the case of unwanted or badly managed job autonomy. Furthermore, job autonomy is presented as a desired feature of work flexibility as well as a need for the overall workplace well-being, yet by giving employees the power to choose their workplace and work schedule, there is the risk of creating a degree of alienation at work as employees are no longer working within a set team, which is also an important driver of well-being. This is just one example of the double-edged sword of FWAs. As assumed by the Social Exchange Theory, people give more when they receive more, but what happens when this is reversed, and employees contribute negatively to the company as a response to the negative outcomes created by FWAs? It is therefore important that FWAs are not implemented without any considerations on their implications on attitudinal outcomes and organizations should instead understand how the different measures may affect their diverse team.

2.3.4 Work attitudinal outcomes

The theories discussed in the previous subsection will now be applied to understand the possible shifts in work attitudinal outcomes when implementing flexible work arrangements. The work attitudinal outcomes that are being considered in this study are four: employee well-being, work engagement, job satisfaction, and intention to remain and have been reviewed below.

2.3.4.1 Employee well-being

Well-being is viewed from two distinct perspectives: the hedonic, which incorporates happiness and life satisfaction by focusing on pleasurable moments, and the eudaimonic, which focuses on self-actualisation through virtues such as personal growth and autonomy (Keeman, et al., 2017). Hedonic well-being has been typically assessed through subjective well-being (SWB), which is the presence of positive experiences in one's life, and through cognitive well-being, which is how satisfied one is in different domains, like at work or socially (Henderson and Knight, 2012). Eudaimonic well-being has however been more challenging to assess as it is linked to various constructs which make it more complex (Henderson and Knight, 2012). Indeed, Ryff and Keyes (1995) identify six different dimensions that should be considered for Eudaimonic well-being, namely: self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose, and personal growth.

When taken from a holistic perspective, workplace well-being is looking at how individuals feel about their place of work (hedonic) and whether they feel their work is meaningful (eudaimonic) (Johnson, Robertson, and Cooper, 2018). Guest and Conway (2004) propose that workplace well-being is dependent on specific factors at the

workplace – the intensity of the workload, positive relationships, autonomy, sense of control and involvement, support, and clarity on the job role. Other researchers have put forward similar constructs of what influences workplace well-being. Johnson, Robertson, and Cooper (2018) for instance maintain that positive workplace well-being is due to four core concepts; [1] demands; [2] control; [3] support; and [4] sense and meaning. The European Quality of Life Surveys (EQLS) is also built on a similar concept and considers having autonomy, a sense of purpose, and the ability to enjoy your life as key indicators of well-being (Eurofound , 2021). With this taken into consideration, the overall state of well-being for employees may indeed vary if flexible work arrangements are implemented, since the latter influence greatly the drivers of well-being mentioned in this section.

Well-being has frequently been measured through scales covering SWB, which look at how people react differently to their circumstances and how they perceive these conditions based on their individual experiences and characteristics (Diener, et al., 1999). This research will however consider psychological well-being (PWB), a more recent scale developed after SWB (Diener, et al., 2009). PWB focuses on shared human needs and ideal human functioning (Ryff, 1989) and which request individuals to analyse their thoughts, assert their values, make decisions to reflect these values, and work towards their goals. Through PWB, autonomy, environment, personal growth, relationships, purpose, and self-acceptance can be assessed (Akin, 2008), thus combining both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being and representing the indicators of well-being mentioned earlier on in this section.

2.3.4.2 Work engagement

Introduced in academia by Kahn (1990), engagement at work is a popular concept that has received a lot of attention in recent research (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2010). While the terms *work engagement* and *employee engagement* may sometimes be used interchangeably (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2010; Schaufeli, et al., 2017), employee engagement may incorporate aspects on how employees engage with the organisation and blurs the separation between engagement and other constructs such as organisational commitment (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2010). For the purpose of this study, engagement will be referred to as work engagement, which is defined as a work-related state of mind that is positive and that is characterized by vigour and dedication to the job (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2010) and as the opposite of work burnout (Joubert and Roodt, 2019).

Importantly, the job-demand resources (JD-R) model mentioned in the previous section is considered one of the strongest frameworks that may identify the push and pull factors which contribute to work engagement or burnout (Joubert and Roodt, 2019; Turner, 2019). When looking at individual employees, some of the more prominent pull factors identified include support from colleagues, performance feedback and job autonomy while push factors include work overload, and emotional and physical demands (Joubert and Roodt, 2019). Once again, the possible relationship between the implementation of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) and in this case the change in work engagement is quite clear. Here the assumption is that availability of the mentioned job resources increase employee motivation which in turn leads to work engagement and higher performance (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2010).

2.3.4.3 Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction has also frequently featured in research on flexible work arrangements (FWAs) and there are various findings which illustrate a positive relationship between the two (Cotti, et al., 2014). Job satisfaction may be studied through looking at both overall satisfaction and individual satisfaction. The latter is especially important to this study considering the wide range of FWAs that may be implemented, which may in turn be perceived or experienced differently at an individual level (Origo and Pagani, 2008). Indeed, factors including age, position, gender, education, and country of residence have great influence on job satisfaction (Davidescu, et al., 2020) and obviously vary on an individual level. Furthermore, it has also been noted that the concept of the social exchange theory may play an important role in determining one's level of job satisfaction, as employees may compare what they are giving and what they are receiving in return, and from that determine how satisfied they are with their place of work (Hofmans, et al., 2013).

A popular classification of job satisfaction is that bSmith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969), who attribute high job satisfaction to five factors, namely salary, career prospects, colleagues, supervision, and the nature of the work itself. Similarly, Gazioglu and Tansel (2006) suggest that individual job satisfaction can be measured by looking at four factors: [1] control over job; [2] amount of pay; [3] respect from supervisors; and [4] the sense of achievement at the workplace. While they may differ slightly, these factors are all linked to both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as contributors to job satisfaction. Including both types of motivation is indeed very important since individuals may have different triggers of motivation that determine their experience at the workplace (Hofmans, et al., 2013).

2.3.4.4 Intention to remain

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the struggle to retain talent in the contemporary workplace is being felt by companies worldwide, most especially with the influx of millennials taking over a major part of the labour market and who tend to exhibit less loyalty towards their employers when compared to previous generations (Naim, 2018). It is therefore in the employer's interest to understand how different management practices, such as FWAs, may affect their workforce's intention to remain within that organisation.

A lot of research on voluntary turnover use the theoretical concept presented by March and Simon (1958). Their model focuses primarily on two factors that contribute to an employee's decision to leave or remain within a company: (a) the perceived ease of movement in and out of the company, and (b) the perceived desirability of the movement. The former looks at the different opportunities the employee has while the latter looks at the extent to which an employee would want to move, taking into consideration factors such as job satisfaction and happiness. This model does not however take into consideration other factors that influence one's decision to remain such as the varying degrees of commitment an employee might have towards the organisation (Long, et al., 2012) and the psychological process one goes through before deciding. Taking a more psychological approach to understanding turnover, Mobley's (1977) turnover model presents three stages that employees go through when deciding to leave a company: [1] thinking about quitting a job, then [2] starting to look for alternative employment, and [3] deciding to quit at an unspecified time in the future. In more detail, an employee would first evaluate the job that they have especially in terms of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction will trigger them to start

looking for alternatives. Once they compare the alternatives with what they have, they will then decide on whether to leave or stay (Long, et al., 2012). Evidently, job satisfaction plays a crucial part in one's intention to remain. Other factors that have been shown to influence turnover include organisational support, engagement, training and development (low rate) and job ambiguity and job stress (high rate) (O'Connor, 2018).

2.5 Generations

Similar to what Grawitch and Barber (2010) maintain that work-life balance (WLB) research needs to focus on the various measures individually, research on the impacts of flexible work arrangements (FWA) on employees should not look at the workforce within an organisation as a whole. This research will in fact analyse the relationship between FWA and the named work attitudinal outcomes while considering the varying characteristics of generations within an organisation.

The exact definition of generations varies in literature and has developed over time, yet most definitions are typically centred around "the succession of people advancing in different age groups" (Popescu, 2019, p. 16). Famously, Mannheim (1952)[8] defines generations as sets of individuals pertaining to a similar location within social structures: Mannheim goes beyond the idea that individuals can fit in a group simply because they fall within the same age bracket and argues that people must experience the same social, historical, and cultural events to be thought of as similar within their age group.

---

[8] The original essay was published in 1928, and was called *Das Problem der Generationen*, but was then translated in English in 1952.

Ryder (1965) builds on this and maintains that social transformation is a product of how individuals of different ages (which he refers to as *cohorts*) react to the social norms they are born and grow up in, creating the distinctive characteristics that make up the cohorts. Adding to this, Eyerman and Turner (1998) argue that cohorts are defined by the shared lifestyle and common habits that the individuals within the groups experience, which are influenced by the popular media of their time – for instance through music, fashion, and sport – and technology.

Commonly in research, the concept of generations has developed to refer to social trends (Joshi, et al., 2011), and many authors have adopted the cohort concept to look at the mean differences among the birth groups (Lyons and Kuron, 2014). In addition, Joshi, et al. (2011) propose that the focus should be on what they refer to as generational identity, which is the knowledge of belonging to a cohort, and the value individuals put towards this knowledge. Generational identity is then seen to create certain expectations at the workplace and if these are disregarded, the organisation may experience negative work outcomes from employees within the affected cohort (Dencker, et al., 2008).

Strauss and Howe (1991) presented a comprehensive generation taxonomy that is widely used in research on generations. However, though the labels for the cohorts are generally accepted, the start and end dates that are used to define the cohorts vary. Due to the variations in the start and end years, studies on generations and work attitudinal outcomes have been criticised for being flawed (Rudolph, 2015) and that such inconsistencies affect how generations have been conceptualised, defined, and analysed (Costanza, et al., 2012).

Since this study will be looked at from a Maltese context, the start and end dates that will be used reflect those adopted by the European Union[9], based on findings from Pew Research Centre. There is the Traditionals/Silent Generation that includes those born between 1928 and 1945; the Baby Boomers who are those born between 1946 and 1964; Generation X who are those born between 1965 and 1980; the Millennials or Generation Y who are those born between 1981 and 1996; and finally, Generation Z who are those born between 1997 and over.

The work values across the cohorts vary considerably (Smola and Sutton, 2002; Twenge, 2010) and understanding these differences may be key to managing work attitudinal outcomes in an organisation (Beaven, 2014). Indeed, there is growing awareness that the differences are becoming bigger and more evident at the workplace (Costanza, et al., 2012) and have created unprecedented challenges for employers (Costanza and Finkelstein, 2015).

The Traditionals are viewed as conservative, individualistic, and value frugality and hard work since most would have experienced great financial hardships (Strauss and Howe, 1991; Costanza and Finkelstein, 2015). Baby Boomers are seen as rule-abiding (Kowske, et al., 2010) and while they are similar to the Traditionals in that they are considered to have a good work ethic, they prefer working in teams (Haynes, 2011). Traditionals and Baby Boomers are usually less inclined to make career moves than the subsequent generations (Ng and Parry, 2016). Indeed, Generation X are seen to be more self-reliant and entrepreneurial (Haynes, 2011) and willing to change jobs

---

[9] As seen in the publication 'Next generation or lost generation? Children, young people and the pandemic' (by Nora Milotay), European Parliament, 2020

and fields (Pyoria, 2011). They value autonomy (Costanza and Finkelstein, 2015) and are also perceived as being cynical (Beaven, 2014).

The presence of the next cohort at the workplace created quite a bit of stir in organisations and research. Millennials have famously been described as the reason workplace practices have had to be redefined (Martin, 2005; Kowske, et al., 2010; Ng and Perry, 2016). They are viewed as high achievers, in need of feedback, carrying high expectations for their jobs, performance, and employers (Ng and Parry, 2016) and value the presence of technology (Haynes, 2011). Importantly, they have been seen to value family and personal life with more importance than their salary and are not hesitant to change their job or career path if they feel the need (Pyoria, et al., 2017). Quite a few negative attributions have been given to millennials. They have been described as narcissistic (Kowske, et al., 2010; Ng and Parry, 2016), entitled (Costanza and Finkelstein, 2015), and easily triggered to express anger and self-defence (Ng and Parry, 2016).

Following, Generation Z are the latest entrants to the workplace and though not much is yet known, they are viewed as the global generation, having been exposed to the digital world since birth, responsible, conservative, and valuing family (Ng and Parry, 2016).

Despite the growing interest in looking at the cohort traits and work attitudinal outcomes, various studies have demonstrated inconclusive results on how strong the relationship between the two variables is, with some even contradicting the generally agreed-upon cohort traits (Kowske, et al., 2010). Ruldolph, et al. (2018) indeed propose a new way of looking at age differences and work attitudinal outcomes,

51

which they refer to as the lifespan developmental approach. They argue that researchers should stop grouping individuals according to birth years but should instead look at and compare the lifespan development of individuals to understand age related dynamics at the workplace. As Matthijs Bal, et al. (2016) explain, as individuals age and change, the things that motivate them or the personal goals that they would have had change with them.

However, these are still heavily dependent on the social-economic and historical backgrounds that individuals experience, so the lifespan approach should not be considered separately from the cohort approach and the two should instead be considered together when focusing on age-related dynamics in the workplace.

2.6 Summary

This section explored the topics that will feature in this research study, starting with the background behind the need for flexibility, onto flexibility, and finally to the factors that affect how flexibility is perceived and experienced. This was done by examining the various theories and models that have featured in previous published literature on the topics in question and was done to ultimately provide a clear direction and a strong base for the data collection and analyses that will be carried out in this study.

3. Method

3.1 Section introduction

This chapter provides information on how data was collected and analysed to answer the study's research questions. The information present in this section includes details on participants, methods of data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations that were put in place to conduct the research.

3.2 Research design

The study adopted a mixed method approach, and the data was both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative data collection was the primary source of information while the qualitative data collection was carried out to complement the findings from the quantitative analysis. This section has thus been split into two sub-sections to explain both phases in detail.

3.3 Phase 1: Quantitative data

Quantitative data collection was adopted to understand the relationship between the variables of interest, them being flexible work arrangements (FWAs), the four work attitudinal outcomes (WAOs), and millennials. The first phase sought to answer RQ1 and RQ2. Quantitative data was collected through an online questionnaire which was made available for responses for a short period of time. This meant that responses were gathered by the target audience at a specific point in time, resulting into a cross-sectional study. The study was also nonexperimental, meaning the variables were not controlled or manipulated in any way.

3.3.1 Research setting and procedure

The questionnaire was carried out in Malta during the COVID-19 pandemic (January 2022). It was administered online through a survey software and circulated for 30 days. To obtain enough responses and decrease bias, a post on Facebook was created and sponsored to reach people outside the researcher's own community. Furthermore, an incentive to complete the questionnaire was added whereby respondents were able to sign up in a raffle for the chance to win a €15.00 gift voucher. To decrease the risk of receiving random responses from participants who are only completing the questionnaire to take part in the raffle, the prize was only advertised on the fifteenth day of the questionnaire being online, as the target number of responses set for this timeframe had not yet been reached.

3.3.1.1 Pilot Study

A series of pre-tests were carried out before the questionnaire was made public. This was done to ensure that the contents of the questionnaire were clear, logical, and comprehensible. Participants for the testing were chosen based on their age, sex, and education. A summary of the chosen participants is illustrated in Appendix B.

Tests were carried out through online meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic and participants were asked to complete the questionnaire and to take note of any questions they had issues with or feedback on. Cameras and microphones were kept on by all participants so the researcher could see whether participants were struggling or seemed confused as they filled in the questionnaire and whether they made any comments. Once the participants completed the questionnaire, the issues

and feedback were discussed, and the researcher asked questions about the overall experience doing the questionnaire and addressed any comments made as well as clarified any confusion brought up. Proposed changes by the participants were discussed and considered. A list of changes made following the pre-test can also be viewed in Appendix B.

The duration of the questionnaire was targeted to be between 6 to 10 minutes long, but three respondents went over the target duration, spending longer in the final section which pertained to the FWAs. For this reason, it was decided that some of the FWAs would be grouped together to minimise the number of responses required. For example, Shift Work, Rotating Shifts, and Weekend, Evening, Night Work were grouped together and described as '*Scheduled shifts which may or may not have specific days/time'*. The full and final questionnaire can be viewed in Appendix I.

3.3.2 Participants

3.3.2.1 Sample

The sample was calculated by using a sample calculator on the number of employed persons in the Maltese workforce between April - June 2021. The study called for a random sample as the first objective was to establish the relationship between the named variables within the Maltese workforce (RQ1). The published number of employed persons (excluding self-employed) was two hundred and twenty-five thousand eight hundred and fifty-six (225,856) (NSO, 2021). With a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error at 5%, the sample size came to 384. This was calculated using the Cochran formula through an online automatic sample

calculator[10]. The second objective (RQ2) was to establish whether age extenuates this relationship by looking specifically at millennials. For this reason, the number of respondents received per age group needed to be equally distributed.

566 relevant responses were collected. Age was used as controlling variable in the study, so importance was given to have a fair distribution of both millennials and non-millennials. Indeed, as seen in the mentioned table, 46.3% of the sample is compiled by non-millennials while 53.7% are millennials. Table 2 illustrates the age groups present in the sample collected. Full demographic information of the sample can be viewed in Appendix C.

Table 2

Responses for Category: Age group		
Options	No. of respondents	%
born between 1946 and 1964	36	6.4
born between 1965 and 1980	187	33
born between 1981 and 1996	304	53.7
born in 1997 and later	39	6.9
Total	566	100

3.3.2.2 Inclusion criteria

Respondents of any gender were included in the research *(Q1 Please indicate your sex)*, who could have been employed in either the public or the private sector *(Q10 Please indicate the sector you work in)*. All participants in the research needed to be employed in Malta or Gozo since the research looked at the Maltese workforce. The nature of employment could have been full-time, part-time, reduced, or other *(Q9 Please indicate your main employment status).* Self-employed persons were not included in this research since the topic is flexible work arrangements (Chandola, et al., 2019). There was an option to choose 'self-employed' and 'not employed' in the

---

[10] Through Creative Research Systems – Sample Size Calculator:
https://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm

questionnaire, which would take the respondent at the end of the survey, thanking

them for their participation. The responses given up until that point were not included

in the data analysis. Respondents were also asked whether they had subordinates

(Q11 Do you have managerial responsibilities in your current role?).

Non-Maltese employees working in Malta were also included in the research.

Respondents who chose their nationality as 'Other (includes dual citizenship)' instead

of 'Maltese' *(Q3 Please indicate your nationality)* were then asked to indicate the

number of years they have been in Malta for *(Q4 If not Maltese, please indicate how*

long have you lived in Malta). This was done to get a better understanding on the

extent of cultural or lifestyle similarities between Maltese and non-Maltese people

within the same generation.

Other personal questions included information on their relationship status *(Q5*

Please indicate your marital status), whether the respondents had dependents *(Q6 Do*

you have dependants (for example, children, elderly parents, etc)?) and whether they

were the sole breadwinners in the household *(Q7 Are you the sole breadwinner of*

your household?), with the aim of gathering more information about their life domain,

not only their work domain. A question about the respondent's level of education was

also added *(Q8 Please indicate your level of education)*

3.3.3 Measures

Demographics were central to this study as the research focused on

millennials. Millennials were used as the determining factor in the research. Additional

tests were run to establish whether transforming Age into a controlled variable would

alter the significance, if any, of the correlation observed.

Flexible work arrangements measures typically focus on few or specific tools

(for example in Fuller and Hirsh, 2019; McNall, Masuda, and Nicklin, 2010) or are split

between flexitime and flexiplace (for example, Hyland and Rau, 2002). Using

Choudhary (2016)'s division of FWAs in four categories, and taking a similar approach

adopted by Bayazit and Bayazit (2017), this research presented the four categories of

FWAs *(place, time, amount of work, continuity of work)* and asked respondents about

the availability and usage of the various measures within these groups. This was done

to avoid aggregating the different forms of work flexibility into one or two categories

and thus limiting the definition and understanding of FWAs. By doing so, the study

addresses the issue of how research on work-life balance (and by association, work

flexibility) is somewhat inefficient as it aggregates measures and their effects together

without looking at a wider view of what they include and their effects on all

employees, not ones who fall within specific demographics. This strategy was also

used to simultaneously create more awareness on the perhaps less-known measures

that one may be offered, or requests. Since respondents may not be familiar with all

the measures, a brief description of each measure was given in the questionnaire.

Importantly, the measure needed to distinguish between availability and

usage. Respondents were thus questioned on the use of FWAs and not only their

availability in the organisation. This was done by using Allen's (2001) four-item

scale:[1] not offered but I do not need it; [2] not offered but I could use it; [3] offered

but not used; [4] offered and I use it. This scale was slightly adapted by changing the

tense of the options to include 'have used' *(example: [3] Offered but I do not/have not

used it)* as some measures may be used temporarily or once. Furthermore, another

option was added to the scale – [5] I am unsure if offered – as respondents might not

be aware of all the measures their organisation may offer and would not be able to choose from [1] to [4]. Item [5] was valued as zero (0) on the scale, while the other items were given a value from [1] to [4] according to usage, with item [4] being given the highest value. This was done so one is able to see how responses vary from each other and different shades of offering FWAs and using FWAs.

Employee well-being was measured using the Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB) (Diener, et al., 2009). This scale is built on scales previously established by authors including Ryff (1989) and Ryan and Deci (2000) with the goal of having a shorter yet still valid scale that can be used in surveys while also incorporating certain aspects that previous scales did not, such as engagement and interest which are also important drivers of well-being (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990); Peterson and Seligman (2004). Respondents assessed the PWB using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from [1] Strongly disagree to [5] Strongly agree. This was adapted from the original 7-point Likert scale established by Denier, et al. (2009) to lessen the variables respondent had available.

The PWB was further adapted to be more work-orientated since the subject is employee well-being. This was done my slightly altering the statements to change the domain being questioned *(example: 'I have a purposeful and meaningful career' instead of 'I lead a purposeful and meaningful life')*. A higher score indicates a person having strong psychological well-being at the workplace.

Employee engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). Originally seventeen item scale, this scale was reduced to nine items and more recently to three which incorporate the main three categories of the

previous scales: vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, et al., 2017). The UWES is a tool that has been used in many studies on employee engagement and Schaufeli, et al. (2017) show that the shortened version can compare the longer versions when wanting to shorten the duration of surveys, such is the case for this study. The scale asks respondents to mark the frequency they experience certain attitudes at work (for example, *'At my work, I feel bursting with energy'*) on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from [1] *Never* to [7] *Always*.

Job satisfaction was measured using the Andrews and Withey Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (1976). In their systematic review on instruments which measure job satisfaction, Van Saane, et al. (2003) found that the Andrew and Withey Job Satisfaction Questionnaire met their reliability and validity criteria. Though there were other measurements that met the criteria of Van Saane, et al. (2003), the Andrew and Withey Job Satisfaction Questionnaire was the shortest questionnaire in the review, having five items *(for example, 'How do you feel about the people you work with?')* to be rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from [1] Terrible and [7] Delighted. According to Rentsch and Steel (1992), this instrument is *"a reasonable short-form alternative for research situations calling for the measurement of general job satisfaction''* (p. 358)*.

Intention to leave was measured using the three item scale (for example, '*It is likely that I will actively look for a new job next year*') developed by Cammann, et al. (1983) which respondents needed to rate on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from [1] *Strongly disagree* to [5] *Strongly agree*. This measure has frequently been used to test

turnover intentions of employees (for example, in O'Connor, 2018; and Shahnawaz and Goswamy, 2011) which have reported good validity for the scale.

The scales that have been adopted and adapted for the qualitative research can be found in Appendix A.

3.3.4 Data analysis

3.3.4.1 Data Cleaning

The data collected from the survey was firstly inputted onto a spreadsheet and any data which was unnecessary for the analysis, such as the total duration of each survey, where the survey was done from, and so on, was removed. Each option for each item was then given a numerical key as a code. For instance, the item Sex was given one [1] for 'Males', two [2] for 'Females', and three [3] for 'Other/Prefer not to say'. This transformed all the data into numerical figures. In cases of scales, which were used for the Work Attitudinal Outcomes (WAO) and also the Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA), greater value was given according to their positive meaning. For instance, in Job Satisfaction, 'Terrible' was valued as one while 'Delighted' was valued as seven. In cases where the meaning was associated with no-value, such as the case of 'Never' in Engagement, or 'I am unsure if offered' for FWA questions, a zero value was given. Responses for FWAs that were valued as zero were then removed from the data analyses since the research questions are looking specifically at the usage and knowledge of FWAs.

3.3.4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 and Table 4 below illustrate the mean scores and standard deviation for the work attitudinal outcomes and their internal consistency.

61

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviation for the four variables

Variable	M	SD
1. Job Satisfaction	26.46	4.49
2. Engagement	14.74	3.08
3. Well-being	31.08	4.45
4. Intention to Leave	7.51	3.44

Note: M indicates Mean. SD indicates Standard Deviation

Table 4

Internal Consistency of the four variables

Variable	α
1. Job Satisfaction	.822
2. Engagement	.857
3. Well-being	.831
4. Intention to Leave	.920

Note: α represents the Cronbach's Alpha.

3.4 Phase 2: Qualitative data

The second phase of the research consisted ists of qualitative data with the aim to elaborate further on the patterns obtained in Phase 1. This section will therefore explain the procedure adopted for Phase 2 of the research, which seeks to answer RQ3. The method of research for this second phase was focus groups.

3.4.1 Research setting and procedure

Three focus groups (FGs) were organised between end of July 2022 and beginning of August 2022. Each session had six participants and they each had a mix of millennials and non-millennials participants in attendance. Sessions were scheduled in the evening and convenient locations for the participants. Phase 2 did not include a reward for participation. The researcher acted as the moderator in these sessions.

Participants who voluntarily agreed to take part in the FGs were sent an email upon their confirmation that included information on the research and the FG session. The email also contained the consent form that they would need to sign in person,

prior to the session. Participants were also informed that they may contact the researcher prior to the session should they have queries on the research and their participation.

Prior to the start of a session, participants were presented with a short questionnaire which asked them to give demographic information anonymously.

The introduction of the sessions was centred around a discussion on flexible work arrangements (FWAs), work-life balance (WLB), work attitudinal outcomes (WAOs), and the participants' experience and understanding of these concepts. The participants were then led to the first part of the FGs where they were asked to predict where, if any, relationships between FWAs and WAOs were recorded in Phase 1 of the research. Participants were then presented with the results derived from Phase 1 for RQ1. A discussion on the difference, or otherwise, in their perception and the results ensued. Participants were then introduced to the second part of the session which was on generations and whether they thought results would differ for millennials and non-millennials, and in what ways. Following this, the RQ2 results were presented to the participants and once again there was a discussion on the differences, or otherwise, between perception and the results. The participants were also presented with a summary of how millennials score differently on the WAOs than non-millennials which prompted another discussion on generations at the workplace. The sessions were closed off with final questions on the participants' perception of FWAs and WLB in Malta and their ideas on how these can be improved.

Sessions took on average 45 to sixty 60 minutes and all audio was recorded to be transcribed and used when analysing and discussing results in the sections to follow.

3.4.1.1 Pre-testing

A pre-testing session was held before the official focus groups were scheduled to ensure that the questions being asked during the FGs were clear, logical, and comprehensible. Through the pre-test, the researcher noted that there was an issue with the test participant remembering the differences between the measures that fall under the four FWAs and thus the researcher made the decision to include examples for each category in the sheet that the participants would be presented with during the session. No other issues arose during the pre-test.

3.4.2 Participants

3.4.2.1 Sample

Table 5 to Table 7 below are a summary of the participants in each focus group (FGs) session as well as how they will be referred to in this research.

Part of the FGs requested the participants to provide their view on what the results obtained through research question 1 would be. They were each given a sheet with a matrix consisting of the four flexible work arrangements and the four work attitudinal outcomes and asked to mark where they thought the relationship would be recorded.

Table 5

Demographic summary of participants in Focus Group 1

Participant Code	A	B	C	D	E	F
Sex	Male	Female	Female	Male	Female	Male
Age	1981-1996	1981-1996	1965-1980	1965-1980	1997-	1997-
Nationality	Other	Maltese	Maltese	Maltese	Maltese	Maltese
Marital Status	In a relationship and living with partner	In a relationship and living with partner	Married	Married	Single	Single
Dependants	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Sole breadwinner	No	No	No	No	No	No
Education	Diploma/MQF Level 5	Masters/MQF Level 7	Masters/MQF Level 7	Doctorate/MQF Level 8	Post-secondary	Post-secondary
Employment status	Full-time	Full-time	Full-time	Full-time	Casual	Part-time
Managerial responsibility	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No

Table 6

Demographic summary of participants in Focus Group 2

Participant Code	G	H	I	J	K	L
Sex	Female	Female	Male	Female	Female	Male
Age	1981-1996	1946-1964	1946-1964	1981-1996	1981-1996	1981-1996
Nationality	Maltese	Maltese	Maltese	Maltese	Maltese	Maltese
Marital Status	In a relationship	Married	Married	In a relationship	Married	Single
Dependants	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Sole breadwinner	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
Education	Masters/MQF Level 7	Post-secondary	Diploma/MQF Level 5	Masters/MQF Level 7	Degree/MQF Level 6	Masters/MQF Level 7
Employment status	Full-time	Full-time	Full-time	Full-time	Full-time	Full-time
Managerial responsibility	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No

Table 7

Demographic summary of participants in Focus Group 3

Participant Code	M	N	O	P	Q	R
Sex	Male	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male
Age	1965-1980	1981-1996	1997-	1965-1980	1997-	1981-1996
Nationality	Maltese	Maltese	Maltese	Maltese	Maltese	Maltese
Marital Status	Married	Married	In a relationship	Married	In a relationship	Married
Dependants	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Sole breadwinner	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Education	Masters/MQF Level 7	Degree/MQF Level 6	Degree/MQF Level 6	Post-secondary	Degree/MQF Level 6	Degree/MQF Level 6
Employment status	Full-time	Full-time	Full-time	Full-time	Part time	Full-time
Managerial responsibility	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No

3.4.2.2 Inclusion criteria

Participants of the focus groups were from the researcher's own community but still represented the main demographics needed for the study. Participants were chosen based on their age, employment background and availability.

3.4.3 Data analysis

Data from the focus groups was first analysed through the recordings and a summary of the themes and points mentioned by each participant was documented by the researcher. Through this, a thematic analysis was obtained which summarises the main themes brought up and the frequency they were mentioned by the participants.

3.5 Ethical considerations

A Research Ethics and Data Protection form was submitted and approved before research commenced. This form included a self-assessment component which sought to identify any potential harm to research subjects. The research did not pose potential harm on research subjects, so the form was endorsed by the research supervisor without issues.

To abide by the University of Malta's Research Code of Practice[11], consent was requested from the participants of both the questionnaire and the focus groups. Consent for the questionnaire was requested at the end before responses were submitted. Consent for the focus group was given prior to the meeting date and included information on what the discussion would be about. Both forms of participation were on a voluntary basis and respected the University's code of ethics. A sample of the consent requests can be viewed in Appendix F.

3.6 Methodological constraints

Time was perhaps the strongest limitation for both phases of the study. Phase 1 provides many opportunities to delve deeper into the relationships that are being observed, specifically by looking at the demographic characteristics and seeing how these variables may affect the relationship in general as well as for millennials and non-millennials. This would however be very time consuming and would also require a degree of dedication that is larger than what the research project is requesting to entail. Furthermore, since the research had a limited timeframe, the questionnaire for

---

[11] Available from the University's website on:
https://www.um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/research/urec/ResearchCodeofPractice.pdf

Phase 1 was only available for short amount of time. Had there been more time available, the questionnaire would have been made available longer to gather more responses. Apart from that, it would have allowed the researcher to focus on distributing the questionnaire through channels that would reach respondents with specific demographic characteristics that the general respondent pool was lacking. The resource of time also affected Phase 2 of the study as this phase requested people to dedicate some of their personal time to attend the focus groups, after work hours. Since the participants attended the sessions through their own will and not for compensation, the researcher was conscious of the time limit and did not allow certain points to be discussed for long to ensure that the time was kept as scheduled when possible.

Financial resources were also a limitation for this study. To be able to provide a visually attractive and mobile friendly questionnaire to the respondents, the researcher invested in an online survey software. Furthermore, to attract more responses, the researcher promoted a gift voucher that would be given away to one of the respondents of the questionnaire. Having spent an amount of monetary resources in Phase 1, the researcher opted against using further monetary resources in Phase 2. However, providing gift vouchers to participants of focus groups would have attracted people outside the researcher's own community to attend. In this scenario, they would have been asked to dedicate a longer amount of time for the sessions, since they would have been compensated for their time.

The nature of each phase also comes with its own limitations. In Phase 1, respondents were not able to ask the researcher for any clarification of the questions

or have any space to add comments to any of the responses given. There is also the risk of having respondents completing the questionnaire quickly without dedicating enough time for each response, simply to complete it and take part in the raffle.

Meanwhile in Phase 2, respondents were put in a group setting. Such a setting is not always comfortable for everyone, and some respondents may have held back certain comments in fear that they would be judged. In such settings, strong characters usually prevail, and perhaps more quiet individuals automatically stay silent and let the others lead. In cases where the researcher noted such personality traits, the quieter individuals were asked specific questions to encourage participation.

3.7 Summary

This section provided detailed information on how the primary research was conducted to provide answers for the three research questions of this project. The section to follow will illustrate the results obtained through this methodology.

4. Results

4.1 Phase 1 Quantitative data

4.1.1 Section introduction

This section presents the results obtained to answer research question 1 and research question 2 and thus those for Phase 1 of the study. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) by IBM (Version 28, released in 2021) was used to answer this quantitative phase.

4.1.2 Research question 1

Is there a relationship between Flexible Work Arrangements and job satisfaction; employee engagement; employee well-being; and intention to remain?

All four categories of flexible work arrangements (FWA) were correlated with salient outcomes using the Pearson Correlation (R-Value) and 2-tailed tests were run to analyse general probability. The global scores for the four WAOs were analysed across the FWA individually. Therefore, four tests were run to determine the R-value – across FWA Time, FWA Place, FWA Amount, and FWA Continuity. Results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Correlation results for FWAs and WAOs using Pearson Correlation Coefficient

	Job Satisfaction	Engagement	Well-being	Intention to leave
	r	*r*	*r*	*r*
1. FWA: Time	.134**	.160**	.086	-.037
2. FWA: Place	.174**	.169**	.126**	-.053
3. FWA: Amount	-.057	.016	.072	.017
4. FWA: Cont.	.015	-.036	-.017	-.021

Note: *r* represents the Pearson Correlation. The asterisks (**) indicate that correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Job Satisfaction reached a significant correlation with FWA Time $(r = .134, p < .01)$ and FWA Place $(r = .174, p < .01)$. The same was exhibited for Engagement $(r = .160, p < .01); (r = .169, p < .01)$. FWA Place received the only significant correlation with Well-being $(r = .126, p < .01)$. All significant correlations were positive meaning that higher scores on the FWA usage meant higher scores for the mentioned outcomes. None of the correlations with Intention to Leave reached a significant level. Similarly, FWA Amount and FWA Continuity experienced no significant correlation with any of the four outcomes.

4.1.3 Research question 2

Do millennials accentuate this relationship?

RQ2 was answered by performing a two-way ANOVA test. Four ANOVA tests were performed. Each test had a work attitudinal outcome (WAO) as a dependent variable while the fixed variables were the dichotomised flexible work arrangements (FWA[category]D) and the regrouped Age variable (AgeRE) split between millennials and non-millennials. Results are presented in Table 9 to Table 12.

Table 9

2-Way ANOVA including Partial Eta Squared results with Job Satisfaction as a criterion

Individual Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P	η2
1. FWATimeD*AgeRE	3.984	1	3.984	.188	.665	.000
2. FWAPlaceD*AgeRE	.136	1	.136	.007	.935	.000
3. FWAAmountD*AgeRE	26.400	1	26.400	1.272	.260	.004
4. FWAContinuityD*AgeRE	1.898	1	1.898	.086	.770	.000

Note: η² represents the Partial Eta Squared.

Table 10

2-Way ANOVA including Partial Eta Squared results with Engagement as a criterion

Individual Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P	η2
1. FWATimeD*AgeRE	4.486	1	4.486	.472	.492	.001
2. FWAPlaceD*AgeRE	5.859	1	5.859	.632	.427	.001
3. FWAAmountD*AgeRE	14.236	1	14.236	1.470	.226	.005
4. FWAContinuityD*AgeRE	4.562	1	4.562	.459	.498	.001

Note: η^2 represents the Partial Eta Squared.

Table 11

2-Way ANOVA including Partial Eta Squared results with Well-being as a criterion

Individual Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P	η2
1. FWATimeD*AgeRE	57.118	1	57.118	2.762	.097	.007
2. FWAPlaceD*AgeRE	.546	1	.546	.028	.868	.000
3. FWAAmountD*AgeRE	7.296	1	7.296	.398	.528	.001
4. FWAContinuityD*AgeRE	1.435	1	1.435	.062	.804	.000

Note: η^2 represents the Partial Eta Squared.

Table 12

2-Way ANOVA including Partial Eta Squared results with Intention to Leave as a criterion

Individual Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P	η2
1. FWATimeD*AgeRE	12.041	1	12.041	1.055	.305	.003
2. FWAPlaceD*AgeRE	.363	1	.363	.032	.858	.000
3. FWAAmountD*AgeRE	60.204	1	60.204	5.418	.021	.019
4. FWAContinuityD*AgeRE	18.413	1	18.413	1.660	.198	.005

Note: η^2 represents the Partial Eta Squared.

For the purpose of the his study, only the interaction terms are being presented. The only significant result is seen for FWAAmountD*AgeRE for Intention to Leave *(f = 5.418, p < .05).* The rest of the tests display statistical insignificance *(p > .05)* for the variance between the fixed and dependent variables. Through the Partial Eta Squared (η^2) it is seen that the effect size for this significant variance is small *(η^2 < 0.3).*

4.1.3.1 Profile Plots

Figure 2[12] below illustrates the pilot plot for this significant interaction of FWAAmountD*AgeRE for Intention to Leave.
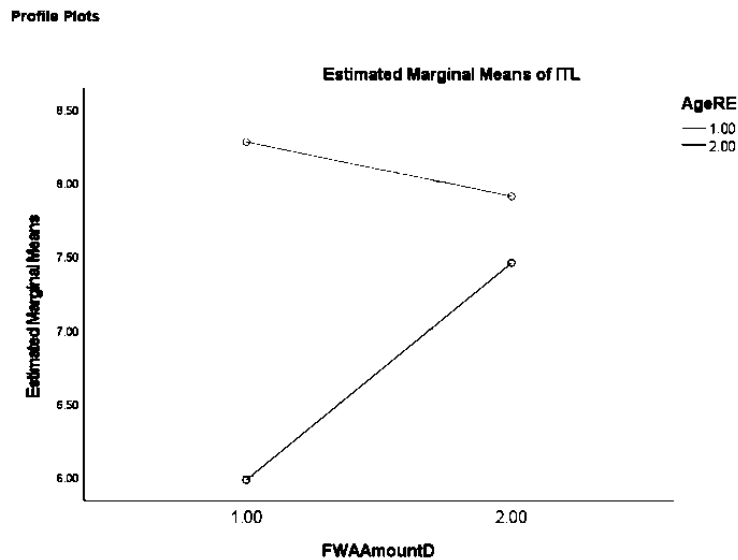
Figure 1 Pilot Plot showing significant scores of millennials

Where the interaction was not significant, the trend was that millennials scored mostly lower scores than non-millennials in the WAOs. In FWA Time, scores for Job Satisfaction, Engagement, and Well-being are lower than those for non-millennial and scores for Intention to Leave are higher for millennials. Scores for all four WAOs increase as scores for the FWA category become higher. In FWA Place, Millennials tend to score lower than non-millennials for Job Satisfaction, Engagement, and Well-being and higher for Intention to Leave. When the *FWAPlace* scores increase, scores for Job Satisfaction, Engagement, and Well-being also increase while those for Intention to Leave decrease. Profiles for the two age groups report similar changes and have almost parallel profile plots. In FWA Amount, millennials tend to score lower than non-millennials for Engagement and Well-being when the use of *FWAAmount* is

---

[12] Millennials (coded as 1.00) and non-millennials (coded as 2.00) on the x-axis relating to the scale of ITL low (coded as 1.00) and high (coded as 2.00) on the y-axis.

both low and high, while Intention to Leave has higher scores for millennials when the FWA use is both low and high. Scores for both Engagement and Well-being increase when *FWAAmount* scores are high while scores for Job Satisfaction and Intention to Leave are lowered. Job Satisfaction in this category experiences an interaction between the age groups as the score for the named WOA for non-millennials decreases with high scores of the FWA category, sharply dropping to the score of millennials on this scale. Scores for both age groups in the profile plots for the rest of the WAOs will all evidently eventually interact. And finally, in FWA Continuity, millennials tend to score lower than non-millennials for Job Satisfaction, Engagement, and Well-being in this category. When scores for *FWACont* are high, the mentioned WAOs record higher scores yet these scores are never as high as those for non-millennials. Intention to Leave sees higher scores for millennials than non-millennials and scores decrease slightly as *FWACont* scores get higher.

4.2 Phase 2 Qualitative data

4.2.1 Section introduction

This section presents the results obtained to answer the final research question, RQ3 and thus Phase 2 of the study. The aim for Phase 2 was to complement the findings of the previous quantitative phase. During this part of the research, participants of three focus groups were encouraged to discuss the topics of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) and changed work attitudinal outcomes (WAOs) along with work-life balance (WLB) in the context of Malta. The participants were also presented with the results from Phase 1 and asked to give their opinions on the reasons why such results were obtained. This section will go through the themes that emerged during the discussion and how the participants interpreted the results of Phase 1.

4.2.2 Research question 3

How do employees explain this relationship?

4.2.2.1 Thematic Analysis

Participants of the focus groups brought up various themes that are related to the research topics. Below is the thematic analysis which highlights the main points of discussion during the sessions. All themes mentioned have been added to the analysis, along with the number of participants which contributed to each theme. Following is a summary of which participants contributed to each theme. Table 13 and Table 14 illustrate this analysis.

Table 13

Thematic analysis of the focus groups conducted in Phase 2 of the research – Part 1

Theme	Number of contributors (N=18)
1. Availability and usage of flexible work arrangements	18
2. Nature of work	18
3. Generations and mentality	17
4. Trust, respect, and loyalty	12
5. Resources	10
6. Expense of living and the future	9
7. Abuse of flexible work arrangements	9
8. Alienation and a sense of community at the workplace	8
9. Changes in Opportunities	7
10. Media and knowledge	7
11. Work environment	6
12. Family friendly measure bias	5
13. Non-work activities	2

Table 14

Thematic analysis of the focus groups conducted in Phase 2 of the research – Part 2

Prt.	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11	T12	T13
A	X	X		X							X		
B	X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X	X	
C	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X	
D	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X		
E	X	X	X	X		X			X		X		
F	X	X	X	X	X					X			
G	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X	X	
H	X	X	X							X			
I	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X			
J	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X			
K	X	X	X		X	X	X						
L	X	X	X		X	X		X		X			
M	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X
N	X	X	X	X		X							X
O	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	
P	X	X	X		X		X						
Q	X	X	X			X		X					
R	X	X	X			X	X	X					

Note: Letters refer to the Participants while T1 to T13 refer to the themes as presented in Table 13. X represents that the participant mentioned the theme.

The first five themes which are illustrated in the thematic analysis above are the themes that were mentioned by more than the majority of participants (*n=9*), making them the dominant themes. The full detailed summary of what each participant said about the listed themes can be seen in Appendix H. The participants' responses to how they believe the correlation between FWAs and WAOs was found in this research can be viewed in Appendix G. In the part to follow, a review of what was said about the dominant themes has been detailed.

Availability and usage of flexible work arrangements was brought up by all participants, primarily because it is the focus of the research and the participants were asked to provide the context of how they experience flexible work arrangements (FWAs). This theme includes almost a full spectrum of availability and usage of FWAs. From Participant A, who described his workplace as being fully flexible and allowing employees to do their work as they see fit (*"you can do your work whenever and wherever, as long as it is within the company's time zone"),* to Participant B who said that her workplace offers very little flexibility and only in extreme circumstances (*"if you are injured you can work from home").* Participant E gave some insight on how too much flexibility can be experienced by employees (*"I felt I had too much flexibility and needed more control and guidance"),* while Participant J maintained that flexibility could interfere with personal commitments. A distinction between how employees and employers or managers perceive flexibility is seen through this theme. For instance, both Participant C and Participant G, who have a managerial position, say that they are happy with the flexibility that they have available at their workplace but find that allowing flexibility to their subordinates comes with difficulties.

Nature of work was also mentioned by all participants but in different lights. A common topic was brought up by participants who worked in the social or educational sectors: the need to be flexible for work because the work impacts people directly. Participant K, who works with a charity NGO, said that if someone called her up to tell her that they were coming with a donation she would "drop everything" and go to collect it. Participant M used to be a principal and often stayed after hours to help a child that needed him. Participant R, an LSE, said that he felt "guilty" to miss a workday if he was sick as he knew that the child he was working with would struggle in class. Similarly, Participant O who works with an NGO for social work said that her work often came in between her personal life and relationships because she dealt with "human deadlines" which could not be simply ignored at the end of her shift. Other participants said that the nature of work should be the main determinant of whether an employee is satisfied with his job. Participant I said that if someone is not happy with the job they are doing, it is" irrelevant" whether flexibility is being offered or not as the person will not be satisfied or engaged. Participant G in fact said that she enjoyed her work even when she was very stressed trying to juggle her work and studies without any flexibility, because for her, her job is important and she enjoys it. Meanwhile, Participant N said that she found no value in the work she did and thus was not engaged at all with her job, even though she is offered flexibility. Similarly, Participant E mentioned that she is thinking of leaving her job because she doesn't feel it "contributes to anything". Participant B mentioned that since the nature of her job can be done through FWAs, such as remote work, she felt very demotivated and frustrated that she was not allowed to be flexible at her workplace - though she also mentioned that the lack flexibility is not the main issue with her dissatisfaction at

work. Participant F said that certain jobs are also "*pushed*" more than others because of their pay. He mentioned that people who are interested in the Arts need to be "lucky" to find a well-paid job and if they do not manage, they will be miserable in the alternative job they found, irrelevant of the conditions.

Generations and mentality as a topic featured a lot in the discussions also, with only one participant not giving it particular importance. Some participants described how the mentality of their superiors did not allow for much flexibility. Participant B and Participant P both have very limited flexibility, and both said that their managers are older than millennials. Participant N said that her workplace became much more flexible when her manager changed and a new, younger, manager was hired. Participant J said that in her work, she sees the difference between clients who are millennials and those who are older. She mentioned that the older ones tend to want things done in traditional ways, such as insisting on face-to-face meetings. On the topic of millennials, participants felt that millennials had it more difficult than non-millennials at the workplace for various reasons. Participant F mentioned that they are discouraged to work because the expenses of living have increased but their salaries did not (*"salaries in Malta have stayed the same but we see that the purchasing power has decreased"*). Participant O mentioned that the pandemic made her generation (Gen Z), who are yet not established in their lives, be more assertive about what they want and also become more focused on their well-being. She said that at this point, millennials found themselves "*stuck*" with a loan and a career and were not as free as the younger ones to move around the labour market. Meanwhile, Participant B said that older generations, even the Gen Xs, are "*comfortable*" in their lives and their jobs without a huge loan to pay off so there is less reason for them to be dissatisfied with

work conditions. An element of frustration also came up between the generations. Participant G said that millennials were the "*newbies*" in the workplace who made the biggest change in how work should be done, and the Gen Zs came into the labour market with the changes already made. Participant M and Participant P also say that the younger generations feel entitled to certain measures that they, being boomers, did not have when they started working. Furthermore, Participant G, Participant K and Participant

Trust, respect, and loyalty was a topic that was brought up alongside flexibility frequently. Participant N said that because her company now trusts her to be flexible, she has become loyal to it and turned down a job with a higher salary because flexibility was not specified in the work conditions. Similarly, Participant A said that the trust and flexibility that his company gives him is a "*major reason*" for him to stay at his workpalce. Participant O explained that in both her previous and current job, she has had to deal with a lot of stress, but the fact that her current employment trusts her to be flexible and there is an "*environment of respect*" within the team, she is much happier. Participant D said that the trust he is given on how he does his job mirrors the contribution he gives to the institute her works in and that this pushes him to do more (*"I feel empowered to contribute more"*). Participant E said that she felt more "*eager*" to work and deliver at work once she felt trusted, because she did not want to lose that trust. Participants A, D, E, F, and G all mention trust in terms of having the senior management not keep tabs on the employees' work and micromanage. Participant M said that trust comes with seniority.

Resources were mostly mentioned in terms of personal resources and human resources. Participant I said that flexibility is very important because it allows people to manage their time, which is *"an important limited resource"*. He also said that now his team takes up all their vacation leave and even unpaid leave, because they value their non-work time more. He said that this leaves him with difficulties when trying to get the work done because he would not have all the necessary human resources that he needs available. Similarly, Participant C said that she is unable to offer flexibility to all her team because then she would put herself in a situation where there are no resources to cover the full work schedule. Participant L also said that time is a very important resource and if work starts getting in the way of people's personal time, they are more likely to look for another job. Participant P, O and K all mention that part of the reason they are stressed at work were because there are not enough people available to share the job burden with. Participant F said that Malta does not have the resources for the growth it is aiming for and that this was putting a lot of pressure on the worker (*"there is never a boundary of saying yes, we have reached a point, let's manage it – let's take care of what we have. It is always more"*).

4.3 Review of results

Results obtained through this study show that a significant correlation between using flexible work arrangements (FWAs) and work attitudinal outcomes (WAOs) is reported twice for Job Satisfaction (with flexibility in time and flexibility in place), twice for Engagement (with flexibility in time and flexibility in place), and once for Well-being (with flexibility in place). This makes flexibility in place the most common category of FWAs to see a significant correlation with the WAOs since it

correlated significantly with three out of the four variables. Results also illustrate how this significant correlation is only altered once when the sample of respondents is divided between millennials and non-millennials. This alteration is seen in flexibility in the amount of work and intention to leave. The profile plots created from the research data also depict an important difference between millennials and non-millennials as the graphs illustrate how in most of the cases, millennials have lower scores of WAOs than non-millennials. These results were discussed and presented to participants in focus groups with the aim to understand the reasons behind them. In the discussions that ensued on the results, various topics and explanations were brought up. The themes ranged from the mentality of employees and employers to the media and how it portrays work, to how today's future prospects are affecting the workforce. The themes that featured in the FGs provided better insight as to how the results in the quantitative phase may be interpreted.

4.4 Summary

This section provided the results obtained from the study and answered the three research questions presented at the start of this write up. The chapter to follow will delve into the details of these results and discuss them against the theories and literature analysed previously.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Section introduction

The results of this research study provide insight on the availability and use of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) in Malta, across millennials and non-millennials, and how they affect (or otherwise) the four named work attitudinal outcomes. This section will start with an interpretation of these results, where the quantitative data is simultaneously analysed against the qualitative data gathered through both primary (the focus groups) and secondary (the literature review) sources. The discussion will then move onto the theoretical and practical implications of the results, considering the theoretical framework discussed in section 2.3.2, that leads to a proposed framework for the sustainable implementation of FWAs. Following is an overview of the limitations of the study and further research that can be done on the topic. And finally, there is the conclusion for the research projects which provides a summary of the research study as well as the final remarks from the researcher.

5.2 Interpretation of results

5.2.1 The transition from perks to standard entitlements

The results from Research Question 1 show how flexibility in time and flexibility in place contribute to improved work attitudinal outcomes (WAOs) at the workplace. Flexibility in place was the more impactful on the WAOs of the two, as it was associated with higher job satisfaction, employee engagement, as well as employee well-being. The results also show how flexibility in the amount of work and flexibility in work continuity do not relate to significantly high scores of WAOs.

As was indicated in the focus groups (FGs), measures in the categories of flexibility in amount and work continuity are now largely expected by employees and have become standard practices in the labour market. If something is expected or taken for granted, it is unlikely that it would improve employee attitudes at work. For instance, flexibility in the amount of work includes measures such as part-time work, overtime, shutdown, and reduced hours while flexibility in work continuity includes measures such as sick and vacation leave. These are all measures that have become common practices. They are also categories with lesser-known or uncommon measures, such as job sharing, phased retirement, and work-study coops for flexibility in the amount of work, and sabbaticals and intermittent leave for flexibility in work continuity. In addition, such measures are mostly experienced temporarily by employees – they are not part of the everyday work schedule. This makes their overall impact on employee attitudes less significant. Furthermore, as Russo (2012) stated, some of these listed measures might also not be the primary choice of the employees and thus less likely to contribute to positive employee attitudes. For instance, part-time work might be taken up by individuals as a secondary source of income to keep up with life expenses. Overtime, part-year work, and temporary layoffs are also examples of measures that are mostly likely imposed by the employer, rather than requested by the employees.

On the other hand, flexibility in time and flexibility in place are still largely considered as perks in the Maltese labour market and their presence, since not yet widespread, may still be key for improved work attitudinal outcomes. The reality is that these measures are still predominantly provided to those with care responsibilities and other employees are completely dependent on the employer as to

whether they experience this flexibility or not, since no nation-wide policies are in place yet. What's more, employers may also have the tendency to value the personal time of those without care responsibilities with less value, thinking that these employees staying later at work, for example, would not interfere with anything important since they do not care for a family. Yet, as Kalliath and Brough (2008) argue, non-work activities must be defined as activities that go beyond family responsibilities, and need to include activities such as sport, socialising, and learning. Meanwhile, it became apparent through the FGs that for those employees who have experienced flexible work arrangements in place and time, these measures have already become part of the expected work conditions. A transition from perks to standard practices can therefore be already seen for the less widespread flexible work arrangements of place and time.

5.2.2 A holistic approach to work-life balance

On why flexibility in time and flexibility in place showed significant changes in attitudes, one of the main reasons brought up during the focus groups (FGs) was centred around the fact that through these measures, employees can dedicate more time for their personal commitments. This is much in line with Grawitch and Barber's (2019) and Voydanoff's (2005) arguments that having employees being able to adjust their work according to their personal needs reduces the presence of conflict between their work and life domains and helps them achieve a better work-life balance (WLB). Time being a valuable and limited resource was central in these discussions during the FGs, as by having flexibility in time and place, they gain more time for non-work commitments. Importantly, it is the life domain that needs to be considered, not simply the family domain. Time is limited for everyone – not just parents.

However, the FGs confirmed that flexibility in both time and place may come to the detriment of one's WLB. As Bergen and Bressler (2019) argue, some measures obscure the boundaries of the work and life domain and have a negative impact on one's well-being. Evidently, employees are becoming more aware that flexible work arrangements (FWAs) may blur the boundaries between their work and life domain and a negative spill-over could be observed from some of the experiences brought up during the sessions. The participants' awareness on how FWAs can become issues for the WLB is important, as it shows that the first-hand reality of experiencing certain FWAs is not as positive as FWAs are commonly depicted in the media. Indeed, there is a dark side to the technology that facilitates FWAs, as Holland and Bardoel (2016) explain. Considering the results, however, it is currently still a case of the advantages outweighing the disadvantages, as on average, people with time and place flexibility exhibited significantly positive scores on the majority of the work attitudinal outcomes studied. Yet the question is, how long will employees exhibit these positive attitudes at the workplace if FWAs are in place without being based on sustainable and guided policies?

Importantly, as MacDermid (2005) and Eikhof, et al. (2007) stated, employers should not make assumptions on what employees require to reach a WLB and thus measures of flexibility at work need to be implemented according to the individuals and should not be a one-size-fits-all sort of situation. Apart from that, though, employees cannot be given the full autonomy to decide which FWAs to use without the employer ensuring that these measures will not interfere with the company's operations. For this reason, the availability of FWAs must be based on a thorough and

informed company policy which ensures that the measures are in place fairly and without creating issues to the employee's WLB or the company's overall productivity.

5.2.3 Work attitudinal outcomes

Job satisfaction and employee engagement featured the most in the discussions for RQ3 during the focus groups (FGs). A common theme in the FGs was that flexible work arrangements (FWAs) should not have much impact on job satisfaction as this should be directly linked to whether an employee likes the job or not, irrespective of whether there are FWAs. In this way, if employees take on a job that they do not enjoy, they are unlikely to have a high job satisfaction rate even if there are FWAs in place. Such a reality is being heightened by the increased costs of living, which is driving employees away from certain industries that they enjoy, such as teaching, to better paid jobs that would not necessarily be their passion or first choice. As for employee engagement, it seems that a common perception is that FWAs come at a detriment on employee engagement, especially for younger employees, as they tend to alienate themselves from the rest of the team through technology. As Joubert and Roodt (2019) mention, factors that increase engagement include support and feedback, but FWAs tend to change the way these two factors are traditionally provided to the employees.

Intention to leave was not recorded to have any significant impact on the work attitudinal outcomes (WAOs) surveyed for the research. In the study, the presence of high flexibility usage did not coincide with a higher rate of intention to leave. Such findings reiterate the general assumptions that FWAs are tools that can be used to influence employees to stay with a company. However, when the study looked at the

differences in the scores of millennials and non-millennials, intention to leave was the only WAO to score differently. The results show that when the flexibility in amount of work was high, non-millennials were more likely to score high on intention to leave. Generational traits may help in explaining this difference. Take the case of baby boomers, who value rigid and standard work practices and millennials, who value their non-work time and are seen as the generation to create the pressure for alternative ways of working. The way they perceive FWAs may indeed be different. For instance, reduced hours may be perceived as unstable work conditions for non-millennials while for millennials it may be viewed as an opportunity to have more non-work time available. However, Gen Z, who participants describe as being more assertive and well-being focused than millennials, would share the same views as millennials in this scenario, since such measures may provide them with more time for their non-work commitments. Therefore, it is more the case of having the young employee values versus the old ways of looking at work, rather than a case of millennials versus the rest.

5.2.4 Generations at the workplace

Though generations may be perceived as being distinctly different from each other, bringing their different social trends and priorities as they enter the labour market (see Kelliher, et al.,2018), there also seems to be an element of the new generations inspiring the old, as illustrated in the previous section. Changing social trends are affecting all generations, not just the younger ones, especially because there is much more awareness nowadays on work-life balance. Though millennials might have been the reason why companies are now looking at alternative ways of

doing business, they are not the sole beneficiaries of this movement. For this reason, we may eventually see a shift in what values all generations hold at the workplace.

An interesting difference between millennials and non-millennials was nonetheless still observed through the findings. Although not in significant amounts, millennials tended to score lower than non-millennials when it came to the work attitudinal outcomes (WAOs) (see Appendix E). On average, they scored lower on job satisfaction, employee engagement, and employee well-being, and higher scores on intention to leave. The overall image depicted here is that millennials exhibit fewer positive attitudes at work than non-millennials. Millennials are the first generation to be born during a technological boom, where technology became accessible for the majority. This, coupled with the social and financial growth of the country, gave millennials more opportunities and choices for their future growing up than what previous generations were offered. Such growth may have created a sense of anxiety in millennials, fearing that they would make the wrong choice when everything was so new. It may have also created a spoilt and entitled generation, unprepared for the stresses of adulthood. An important factor may however be linked to the rise in living expenses in Malta which have affected the general level of positivity young employees perceive work.

There is also no denying that millennials are more connected to the internet than older generations. They have always had access to the internet, and with it, to social media and widespread knowledge. Alternative work conditions, demoralising effects of issues such as climate change on the future, and endless adverts and posts on travel and material things, are but some of the elements millennials are heavily

exposed to through the internet. These elements have a direct impact on how millennials then perceive work, as well as life, which is in line with Joshi, et al. (2011)'s concept of social trends shaping social identity of the age cohorts. However, one may argue that Gen Zs are in a similar, or an even more heightened, situation as they are also a generation that has been completely immersed in technology since birth. Yet Gen Zs are not at the same stages as millennials. They have only just entered the labour market and are not yet looking at the prices of purchasing property or general life expenses, as they are most likely still living with their parents. For this reason, they are not yet as demoralised and unsatisfied with what awaits them as the average millennials are. This is in line with the lifespan development approach (Ruldolph, et al.,2018), mentioned in Chapter 2: rather than looking at the birth cohorts, we should be looking at the stages people are in and understand their priorities and needs during this time to fully understand what they need to be satisfied and engaged at work.

5.2.5 Summary of the interpretation of results

There are four important takes from the results gathered from this study. Firstly, that flexible work arrangements (FWAs) go through a process: from perks to standard entitlements. As measures become more common and widespread, employees stop perceiving them as perks and, in this way, they may no longer contribute to constantly improved employee attitudes. This does not mean to say that they do not contribute to positive attitudes, however. Just as measures like vacation leave and reduced hours have become widespread as entitlements or choices, so should other measures be considered in this same light. Rather than looking at how these measures improve employee attitudes, focus should be given to how they are implemented sustainably to keep up the positive attitudes they create once

introduced. Secondly, while generations are important to view individually as they are

direct products (and contributors) to changed social trends, it is also important to look

at the stages of life they are in. What are they prioritising? What conditions will help

facilitate their current situation? This then takes us to the third point: measures need

to be implemented on an individual basis. Employees, even within the same age

cohort, are at any point in time going through different stages in their lives and have

their own individual priorities and responsibilities. It is unwise for employers to

implement company-wide measures of flexibility as these measures will be perceived

differently by the various personalities that make up a company. The final take-away is

that flexibility is a two-way relationship – it must come from both the employer and

the employee. The employer must consider in depth how to implement FWAs without

them interfering with the company's productivity – it is not, and should not, be an

easy task. In return, employees must be flexible to the company, without it interfering

with their work-life balance.

5.3 Theoretical and practical implications

5.3.1 Resources and control

A recurring theme brought up in both the literature review and during the

focus groups was that flexible work arrangements (FWAs) are especially important for

employees to work around their personal commitments. Pressure is being put on

companies to make worktime more flexible so employees can find more time for their

non-work activities. As Grawitch, et al. (2010) explain, personal time is a finite

resource, and the growing trend in the work-life balance (WLB) movement is centred

around the need to conserve as much of this finite resource as possible.

Providing measures by which employees can have more autonomy in their job is important in the quest of creating a more WLB-focused environment. This is what FWAs ultimately aim to achieve – autonomy on time, place, amount, and continuity of work. As the Job Demands-Control (JD-C) model states, the demands of one's work are countered through having job control. However, unstructured autonomy is not the answer to WLB. As Kubicek, et al. (2017) maintain, job autonomy may come to the detriment of the employee if not implemented strategically. Employees must be given support and guidance in their work: they do not suddenly become lone workers. Monitoring productivity is also a crucial part of job autonomy as, without this, managers will find it increasingly more difficult to keep up with their now fragmented team. Control is thus needed from both the employee and the employer and/or manager. While the employee may have more control over the job, the employer and/or manager must ensure that productivity is still under control despite the changes in how the work is being delivered.

The Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) model is also evidently an important framework to consider for FWAs. It was clear during the FGs that certain job demands require the workplace to be flexible in different degrees. For example, in jobs where there is a high demand for psychological efforts, such as the case of social workers, employees require stronger mental well-being resources to deal with the demands, beyond mere autonomy. These may come through time off, mental health days, or being able to share the psychological burden with other colleagues, to name a few.

Importantly, resources are also essential to have as a company in general, not only as employees. A lack of human resources is often the reason why FWAs are not

offered or taken up at the workplace. Providing autonomy in the job is worthless if employees are overworked and job demands are higher than they can control. Even a resource as standard as vacation leave becomes counterproductive as users return to work with a backlog awaiting them. A right to disconnect is not going to get the job done while employees are away – but a handover is. There is also the issue of not having enough human resources to cover the company's demands – for example, if the company demands that there is someone at the office at certain hours or days in the week, there must be at least two people available for this demand, as this will allow the employees to fit certain FWAs around each other. Such a scenario is not extreme – take the example of a receptionist, whose nature of the job is to be present at the workplace. How can this employee make use of standard measures such as vacation and sick leave? There must already be a replacement available as these measures are by law. So why shouldn't FWAs that are available in such workplaces extend to measures like compressed workweeks, reduced hours, and flexitime?

5.3.2 Voluntary and involuntary workplace distancing

As seen in Chapter 2, alienation at the workplace may come in various forms and has been around, perhaps unnoticed, for long. However, it is being experienced and discussed much more in recent times. This is because the pandemic forced us to be isolated from each other and the feeling of alienation became too evident to ignore. Indeed, the pandemic created what Kozhina and Vinokurov (2020) refer to as involuntary workplace distancing. As employees were forced to be flexible and work from home, any alienation that was created from this situation was involuntary. Yet such a situation can easily be countered by offering flexible work arrangements (FWAs) as choices, rather than imposing them on employees.

However, providing autonomy as a choice may still lead to workplace distancing. By changing the ways people traditionally do their jobs, conventional practices which look at factors such as engagement, productivity, and support must also change. As Ng and Parry (2016) maintain, FWAs have called for a change in standard human resources management. This is being seen most especially with employees who are immersing themselves more in technology. For example, through opting for remote work, where traditional interaction with colleagues is reduced, or by coming from e-learning environments where individuals become used to working and focusing alone, perhaps with headphones on. This reality is especially being seen among Gen Zs, who seem to prefer alienating themselves from the rest of the team even when they are present at the office. Indeed, Gen Zs have always been exposed to technology, more than millennials, and the way they work and socialise is something that is still very new for the rest of the generations.

What is important to consider is that the ways employees are managed and supported need to also adapt to the changes that FWAs are bringing to the workplace. Physical distance should not equate to employee alienation. Reiterating the previous point made, managers must ensure that they are still providing the support and feedback required despite the changes in how work is being completed. The change in how work is being done must mirror the change in how employees are being managed.

5.3.3 Trust and abuse

A key point that was brought up in both the literature review and the result analysis was that flexible work arrangements (FWAs) depend on trust. As Newman

and Mathews (1999) explain, a lack of trust is one of the four reasons why employees may have flexibility available at work but do not make use of it. It is also another reason why managers or companies may not offer FWAs. This is a reality in Malta, with both situations being also echoed during the focus groups. As Konrad and Young (2012) maintain, in such cases, FWAs may be perceived as career-limiting for employees and workers will avoid making use of them for this reason. Apart from this, this lack of trust and availability of FWAs is seen to create a feeling of frustration and demotivation among employees, especially knowing, due to the pandemic, that flexibility was only available when it suited the company.

Lack of trust is primarily created because of the possibility of abuse. The topic of abuse came up regularly in the FGs, almost exclusively by those in managerial positions. Afterall though, the widespread demand and use of different FWAs is a huge learning curve for managers as they have changed standard managerial needs completely.

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) is crucial for the issue of trust and abuse. Successful FWAs depend on a cycle based on trust, loyalty, and fairness. Employees are given flexibility and autonomy over their work and being productive in return. On the contrary, if the employer and/or manager or an employee is only giving or receiving, the effects of the SET are opposite. Importantly, in certain cases, the concept of the SET might even come to the detriment of one's work-life balance. For example, employees who earn a high salary might feel that they need to justify this salary by going over and above what their role asks for. In this way, the exchange

should be based on fairness and balance – what is received should not be overpowered by what is given, and vice-versa.

5.3.4 Generations and individual needs

The growing attention on measures that help create a better work-life balance (WLB) for employees has come at a time when millennials make up the greatest part of the workplace. That, coupled with the values that millennials brought with them to the workplace, created a sense of understanding that by providing flexible work arrangements (FWAs) at work, millennials would show positive attitudes. However, as previously shown, there was only one significant difference between millennials and non-millennials: the intention to leave when flexibility in the amount of work was high. Apart from that, the results also showed that millennials exhibited weaker scores in positive employee attitudes at work (job satisfaction, employee engagement, and employee well-being), indicating that they are unhappier than non-millennials at the workplace.

The lack of significant differences between millennials and non-millennials when looking at how the availability and usage of FWAs affect the work attitudinal outcomes (WAOs) suggests that these measures are perceived in the same way throughout. Being able to have more control over your job and giving more time for your non-work activities is something that all employees seek because the need for a WLB is not restricted to an age group. This links in with the argument that FWAs need to be available for all. What is important to consider, however, is how the measures should be implemented to suit the different generations. As Ng and Parry (2016) explain, millennials tend to rely on feedback so providing support while allowing

flexibility is important. Meanwhile, Gen Xers arecommonly seen as being self-reliant

and in need of autonomy so they might not appreciate as much feedback as

millennials, for instance.

Millennial values have changed the values of the rest of the workplace

generations, yet millennials are seemingly having a tougher time at the workplace

when compared to the rest. A big part of the reason for this can be linked to the

increasing costs of living expenses and rising costs in the property market. The

property prices in Malta saw their largest increase (by 50%) between 2016 and 2019

(Grant Thornton Malta and Dhalia Real Estate, 2022), when millennials would have

been between their early twenties and their late thirties. These are ages when people

generally start looking into settling down, buying a house, and starting a family.

Meanwhile salaries remained largely unchanged in most industries. To give a quick

comparison, the minimum wage saw just a 4.7% increase between 2016 and 2019[13]

while the average minimum wage saw an increase of 12.5%[14] during this period.

At the same time, social media, mass consumerism and mass marketing all

aided in creating today's reality of working to live, not the other way round. This

meant that more importance was being given on how non-work time is spent. The

routine of working, going home, maybe go on a vacation with the family once a year

was over. Yet the exposure has also led to increased mental health issues. This is

because through social media, average users are constantly being exposed to non-

average lifestyles and adverts specifically tailored for their preferences. They compare

---

[13] Minimum wage in 2016 was €168.01 while that in 2019 was €175.84 per week for people aged 18 and over (National Minimum Wage National Standard Order: Subsidiary Legislation 452.71)
[14] Average wage in 2016 was €17,239 while that in 2019 was €19,390 (Labour Force Survey, NSO).

what they have with what they want to have - and can also see the price tag. This comparison can also be seen locally, as industries such as IT and Gaming continued to populate the market and pay above average salaries while offering better work conditions. The internet also meant that users are more connected to the rest of the world, seeing both the better and the ugly: better salaries, better countries, better lifestyles, issues on poverty, issues on global warming, political turmoil – and the list continues. Anxiety, depression, self-esteem issues can all be linked to this unprecedented exposure.

When you compare the expectations of life being created through social media with the reality of the lifestyle in Malta, it is no wonder why millennials are exhibiting low scores in WAOs. As Ng and Parry (2016) point out, millennials tend to have high expectations for their job so this sort of reality check undoubtedly results in demotivation. Yet, this comparison can be made by all employees so why are non-millennials coping with this distress better? As mentioned previously, it is most likely down to the lifespan development approach proposed by Ruldolph, et al. (2018). Millennials are at present slowly settling into their jobs and careers, they have already completed their studies and, and are looking to settle in their personal life as well. However, they also realised that the average job in Malta will not get you an average house. Nor will it be enough to live a life even marginally close to what is being shown on social media, unless they have a well-paid (above average) job. In this way, salary plays a big role in millennial attitudes at work. This goes against what Pyoria, et al. (2017) maintain: that millennials value personal and family time over salaries and find it easier to move jobs if they need to. Perhaps it may have been the case a few years ago, when they were still at the beginning of their careers, but they have now moved

on. With this argument, members of Gen Z will eventually be in the position millennials are now, or worse if prices and salaries continue to increase unevenly.

Of course, having FWAs at the workplace is still crucial here. For starters, certain FWAs measures allow employees to be able to take on secondary work. Being able to work a part-time job from home, for example, is already a much better scenario than going to your part-time job after your full-time job, both away from home, in order to be able to afford an average lifestyle. In other ways, some allow more flexibility to be able to make the most of non-working time such as the possibility of working from abroad, having extended time off, and so on. In many ways, FWAs make the situation employees are in better. Though they are not the key solution employees need, they at least provide them with better circumstances to deal with the issues.

5.4 Theoretical framework

By merging both the primary and the secondary forms of research in this study, a framework (Figure 3) has been drawn up to illustrate the factors required for the successful implementation of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) at the workplace. The basis of the framework is the social exchange theory (SET).
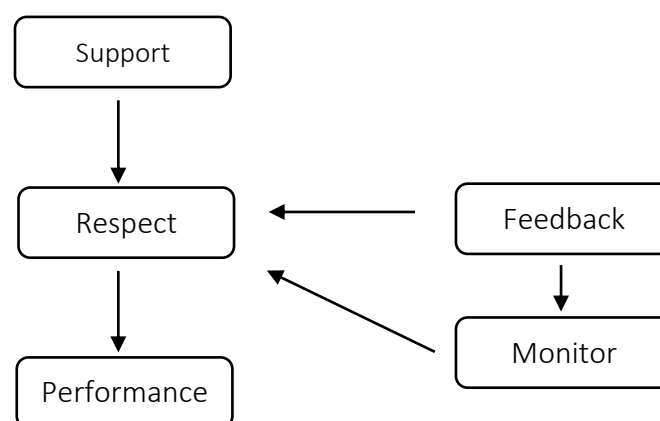

Figure 2 Framework for the successful implementation of Flexible Work Arrangements

As Caillier (2016) identified, the concept of the SET is based on three components. Firstly, the employer and/or manager must show that they want to support the employee. This needs to be done by making FWAs available throughout, without them being limited to crisis management or caring responsibilities. The employees must feel that the FWAs are part of the standard work conditions and should not feel like they are asking for something that comes as an inconvenience to the employer and/or manager. Support needs to also come in the form of human resources. There is the risk of having counterproductive results if, for example, FWAs are implemented instead of the company investing in human resources to share the job strain, or if the lack of human resources limits employees from making use of some measures.

In line with what Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) and Gould-Williams and Davies (2005) indicate, the second component is arguably the most delicate part – the bond between the employer and/or manager and the employee. Through the environment of flexibility, and with it, the trust to have more control over the job, employees form a bond of respect with the employer and/or manager.

This bond of respect that is created should then reduce the presence of abuse in the usage of FWAs as employees would not want to tarnish the relationship they created with their employer and/or manager. This is the final component of the SET. In exchange for the flexibility and trust, employees will not abuse of the FWAs as they would have come to respect the employer and/or manager; employees would not want to disappoint, or risk losing that flexibility, or have the employer and/or manager questioning their trust.

Importantly, the framework includes two additional factors which go beyond the basis of the SET. To be sustainable and long-term in the SET, feedback is crucial. As Joubert and Roodt (2019) identify, performance feedback is one of the key factors that increase employee engagement, which is integral for the respect that the SET aims to create. Furthermore, through providing feedback, managers are also monitoring the performance of employees and able to ensure that the flexibility is not getting in the way of the company's operations. In this way, through monitoring, the trust and respect elements of the SET are also strengthened when managers witness the successful implementation of the FWAs.

There are some important factors that need to be considered for the proposed framework to be successful at the workplace. The initial part of the framework requires the employer to move away from measures which primarily benefit the company and to start looking at measures which are more employee-driven. It also important for the employer and/or manager to understand that support may mean different things for different employees. This depends, as explained in section 5.3.3, not only on the individual and psychological needs of the employees but also on the stage of life they are in. For instance, young employees at the start of their career may need flexibility in order to be able to juggle their studies and work life, while employees who are saving up for a loan may need to be given support to be able to manage a secondary job. A delicate part in this phase is for the company to ensure that the support is provided fairly for everyone. Therefore, policies are important to have in place as they provide guidance for the company to follow and avoid bias. Furthermore, as mentioned, the employer and/or manager must create an environment where flexibility is not only available but encouraged to be made use of.

This is the reason why having enough human resources is important. Employees must feel that making use of certain flexible work arrangements (FWAs) will not interfere with the company's operations or their workload.

The trust that will be created through this will motivate employees to deliver better as they feel empowered and recognised. In some cases, they may also feel like they need to work harder to make up for the flexibility being offered - yet this is not sustainable. The exchange must be a balance between what the employer and/or manager gives and what the employee gives in return. FWAs must not be perceived as special perks that require employees to work harder for them as this will eventually lead to frustration and burnout. Furthermore, as Eikhof, et al. (2007) explain, certain FWAs are ultimately employer-driven, rather than employee-driven, and such measures should not be depicted as if they are concessions to employees as this will not sustain the trust that the framework requires. For instance, a company should not suddenly become fully remote to cut down on rent costs, without offering alternatives such as coworking spaces, and pretend that it is doing this for the employees' well-being.

The way feedback is provided is also very important to consider. First of all, feedback needs to be a two-way conversation and employees should be encouraged to give their own feedback on how the FWAs are being experienced or whether, for instance, they need more guidance in certain areas from their managers. It is a learning curve for both parties and through such constructive conversations, the implementation of FWAs will increasingly become more sustainable and beneficial for both the employer and employee. Furthermore, employers and/or managers must

consider how employees experience feedback differently – the way it is given, how often, and so on. For instance, feedback is something that millennials have been known to seek. As FWAs change the standard ways of doing a job, it is likely that millennials will need more feedback than usual as they transition into a more flexible, and different, work environment. Meanwhile, Gen Xers might not want to feel like they are being guided too much while Gen Zs may value feedback through innovative technological mediums rather than in person. Furthermore, as seen in the previous section, too much autonomy through FWAs may lead to negative employee attitudes as employees are left without guidance and with the added responsibility of managing their work. Therefore, for a company to successfully build an environment based on the SET, managers must ensure that they are providing support and guidance to the employees. As explained, apart from strengthening the bond, this is also a way for managers to check whether the job is still being done well despite the flexibility provided. In this way, managers will strengthen their trust in the employees when seeing that their performance is kept high despite not working within the traditional parameters of work. They are also able to identify any problems in performance early and be able to guide the employees as needed to keep the performance high. Feedback is also crucial for new employees joining the company, when the bond of trust and respect is still at its very early stages, as through feedback the employer and/or manager can identify what kind of measures work best for the individual, what level of support they require, and ultimately whether they fit within the flexible culture or not.

Crucially, a company must also ensure that FWAs are introduced and implemented strategically, rather than as fast incentives to attract and attain talent or

without considering the consequences of no longer having them available. As seen before, FWAs go through a transition from perks to standard practices. If they are at the stage of being standard practices but the company realises that it no longer affords to offer them to the extent that it does, once removed, the respect and exchange will no longer be present.

In this way, the framework is based on constants: constant support, constant communication, constant respect, and constant performance. It is not a framework to increase performance through improved work attitudinal outcomes, as the results of the study indicate that the improvement of employee attitudes is not constant. It is instead based on sustainable long-term measures that require the employer and/or manager to invest, in various ways, in its human resources and respond to the demands of the employee labour market.

5.5 Limitations and further studies

The nature of this study posed certain limitations on the information that can be attained from the data collection. As this was a cross-sectional study, causality could not be deduced. FWAs in Malta are currently going through a process of becoming more widespread around the labour market and their effects may develop in the next few years. Furthermore, the research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic which may have affected employee attitudes at the workplace during this period, irrespective of FWAs. Multiple cross-sectional studies or a longitudinal study may offer better insight on how these measures are being perceived by employees and changing their attitudes at workplace, and better guidance can thus be attained on the sustainable implementation of FWAs in Malta. Through such studies, the

transition of FWAs from perks to standard entitlements that was proposed in the discussion may also be verified and further analysed.

The research study focused on one demographic characteristic – age. This was done to be able to concentrate on one moderating variable on the results. However, other variables may influence how the use and availability of FWAs may relate to work attitudinal outcomes (WAOs). Specific research on FWAs and WAOs with other moderating factors would be greatly beneficial to the body of knowledge available on the subject in Malta. This study gathered demographic data pertaining to gender, nationality, sector or work, education level, care responsibilities, role at work, and others which means that the study can be replicated to look at various other moderating variables that may affect the first part of the research (that is, the relationship between FWAs and the named WAOs).

The FWAs scale used in the study sought to provide a structured categorization of all various kinds of FWAs a company can offer. This was done to eliminate the issue of having all the different forms of FWAs accumulated together. Results show how the four categories of FWAs independently relating to the WAOs. Indeed, this specific study was centred around measures that may lead (or be linked to) abuse my employees. However, within the four categories, there are the different measures listed and data was collected for each of these measures in terms of their usage and availability (see Appendix D). In this way, further research can be done on specific measures of individual FWAs categories such as phased retirement, for example, within the category of FWAs in work continuity, to establish what relationship they may or may not have on the WAOs. Such data can also be used to compare the effects

of the various FWAs measures with themselves. It would also be insightful to see the availability and usage of all the measures within the FWAs categories and establish the most and least common measures being used in Malta. Such as study would provide a better picture on the level of knowledge the Maltese labour market has on the possibilities within FWAs.

5.6 Conclusion

This research study contributes to the understanding and knowledge of flexible work arrangements (FWAs), providing further insight on their effects, both negative and positive, on work attitudinal outcomes (WAOs), and crucially, their transition from being perceived as perks to standard work entitlements by employees. Based on its findings, the research proposes a framework for the sustainable implementation of FWAs. The framework illustrates that through the support, a strong bond between the employer and employee is created and abuse that may result from using FWAs is controlled or eliminated. The framework also sustains that constant feedback and monitoring are required for its successful implementation. Importantly, focus must be given on the managerial practices being used to support, monitor, and guide employees as they must be adjusted to the new flexible ways of doing work. As mentioned at the very start of the study, the labour market has become more employee-driven and thus, companies need to adapt their ways to suit the employees and revamp the ways they operate and communicate internally.

By considering millennials and comparing them with other generations, the research also provides awareness about the possible reasons why millennials may be challenging to manage. Factors such as the costs of living in Malta, social media

exposure, and high work expectations were among the reasons mentioned. However, the study also concludes that there is little to no difference in how FWAs effect WAOs of millennials and non-millennials. Going back to one of the first arguments presented in this study, such findings confirm that achieving a WLB is important for every individual and not limited to people of a certain age or with certain care responsibilities. Furthermore, the research suggests that employees should be managed according to the stages of life they are in, rather than the generation cohort they are part of, as their needs and priorities are much dependent on where they are in their life.

In sum, FWAs do have an impact on WAOs in certain cases however, more importance needs to be given on how they impact the attitudes in the long term. Furthermore, while there are no strong differences between the ways FWAs impact WAOs for millennials and non-millennials, there are indeed difficulties that managers face with millennials in the workplace that are mostly due to the social, technological, and financial factors that millennials have been exposed to. Finally, the concept of holistic and sustainable FWAs needs to be at the top of the priorities of policy makers, be it for national policies or for company policies, to ensure that these measures are implemented in a way to benefit both the employer and the employee in the long-term.

References

ADP, 2019. *The Workforce View in Europe 2019,* s.l.: s.n.

Akin, A., 2008. Th e Scales of Psychological Well-being: A Study of Validity and Reliability. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice,* 8(3), pp. 741-750.

Allen, T. D., Johnson, R. C., Kiburz, K. M. & Shockley, K., 2013. Work-Family Conflict and Flexible Work Arrangements: Deconstructing Flexibility. *Personnel Psychology,* 66(2), pp. 345-376.

Anon., n.d. *National Minimum Wage National Standard Order: Subsidiary Legislation 452.71,* s.l.: s.n.

Ashton, E., 2021. UK Businesses Brace for Great British Resignation in 2022. *Insurance Journal.*

Azara, S., Khana, A. & Eerdeb, W. V., 2018. Modelling linkages between flexible work arrangements' use and organizational outcomes. *Journal of Business Research,* pp. Vol 91, pg. 134-143.

Azzopardi, R. M., 2019. Pay transparency and a cultural shift for real gender pay equality. *The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality: Equal Pay, Iceland,* pp. 1-9.

Bakker, A. B. & Bal, P. M., 2010. Weekly work engagement and performance: A study among starting teachers.. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology,* p. 83: 189–206.

Bal, P. M. & Jansen, P. G. W., 2016. Workplace Flexibility across the Lifespan. *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management,* Volume 34, pp. 43-99.

Baral, R. & Bhargava, S., 2011. HR interventions for work-life balance: evidences from organisations in India. *International Journal of Business, Management and Social Sciences ,* 2(1), pp. 33-42.

Barnett, R. C. & Hall, D. T., 2001. How to Use Reduced Hours To Win the War for Talent. *Organizational Dynamics,* 29(3), pp. 192-210.

Bayazit, Z. E. & Bayazit, M., 2019. How do flexible work arrangements alleviate work-family-conflict? The roles of flexibility i-deals and family-supportive cultures. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 30(3), pp. 405-435.

Beaven, M., 2014. Contemporary Journal of Anthropology and Sociology. *Generational Differences in the Workplace: Thinking Outside the Boxe,* 4(1), pp. 68-80.

Becker, B. E. & Gerhart, B., 1996. The Impact of Human Resource Management on Organizational Performance. *The Academy of Management Journa,* pp. 39(4):779-801.

Bergen, C. V. & Bressler, M. S., 2019. Work, Non-Work Boundaries and the Right to Disconnect. *The Journal of Applied Business and Economics,* pp. 21(2), 51-69.

Berkery, E. C. et al., 2017. On the Uptake of Flexible Working Arrangements and the Association with Human Resource and Organizational Performance Outcomes. *European Management Review,* Volume 14, p. 165–183.

Blau, P. M., 1964. *Exchange and power in social life.* s.l.:Wiley.

Bolger., N. & Schilling, E. A., 1991. Personality and the problems of everyday life: The role of neuroticism in exposure and reactivity to daily stressors. *Journal of Personality,* pp. 59, 355386..

Bonnici, D. S., 2018. *Malta Employers Association Annual General Meeting* [Interview] (March 2018).

Bontrager, M. & Clinton, M. S., 2021. Flexible Work Arrangements: A Human Resource Development Tool to Reduce Turnover. *Advances in Developing Human Resources,* 23(2), p. 124–141.

Boyce, A. S., Ryan, A. M., Imus, A. L. & Morgeson, F., 2007. "Temporary Worker, Permanent Loser?"A Model of the Stigmatization of Temporary Workers. *Journal of Management,* 33(1), pp. 5-29.

Caillier, J. G., 2016. Does Satisfaction With Family-Friendly Programs Reduce Turnover? A Panel Study Conducted in U.S. Federal Agencies. *Public Personnel Management,* 45(3), pp. 284-307.

Camerino, D. & Sarquis, L. M. M., 2010. Nurses' working conditions, health and well (Nurses' Early Exit Study).. *Professioni Infermieristiche,* Volume 63, pp. 53-61.

Cammann, C., Fichman, M., Jenkins, G. & Klesh, J., 1983. Assessing the attitudes and perceptions of organizational members. In: *Assessing Organizational Change. A Guide to Methods, Measures, and Practices..* New York : John Wiley, p. 71–138.

Carlson, D. S., Grzywacz, J. G. & Kacmar, K. M., 2010. The relationship of schedule flexibility and outcomes via the work-family interface. *Carlson, Dawn S; Grzywacz, Joseph G; Kacmar, K Michele.,* 25(4), pp. 330-355.

Chesley, N., 2005. Blurring Boundaries? Linking Technology Use, Spillover, Individual Distress, and Family Satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and Family,* pp. 1237-1248.

Chiat, L. C. & Panatik, S. A., 2019. Perceptions of Employee Turnover Intention by Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory: A Systematic Literature Review. *Journal of Research in Psychology,* pp. 10-15 .

Choudhary, S., 2016. A theoretical framework on flexible work schedules. *International Journal of Academic Research and Development,* 1(10), pp. 8-14.

Clark, S. C., 2000. Work/family border theory: A new theory of work/family balance. *Human Relations,* Volume 53, p. 747–770.

Clark, S. C., 2001. Work cultures and work/family balance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* pp. 58, 348-365.

Collewet, M. & Sauermann, &. J., 2017. Working hours and productivity.. *Journal of Labour Economics,* 47(1), pp. 96-106.

Costa, G. et al., 2004. Flexible Working Hours, Health, and Well-Being in Europe: Some Considerations from a SALTSA Project. *Chronobiology International ,* pp. 21(6):831-44.

Costa, G. & Sartori, S., 2005. Flexible work hours, ageing and well-being. *International Congress Series ,* p. 1280 (2005) 23–28.

Costanza, D. et al., 2012. Generational Differences in Work-Related Attitudes: A Meta-analysis. *Journal of Business and Psychology,* 27(4), p. 375–394.

Costanza, D. & Finkelstein, L., 2015. Generationally based differences in the workplace: Is there a there there?. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology,* Volume 8, p. 308–323.

Cotti, C. D., Haley, M. R. & Miller, L. A., 2014. Workplace Flexibilities, Job Satisfaction and Union Membership in the US Workforce. *British Journal of Industrial Relations,* 52(3), pp. 403-425.

Creswell, J. W., 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches.* s.l.:SAGE Publications.

Cropanzano, R. & Mitchell, M. S., 2005. Social Exchange Theory: An Interdisciplinary Review. *Journal of Management,* 31(6), pp. 874-900.

Csikszentmihalyi, M., 1990. *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience.* New York: Harper & Row.

D'Amato, A. & Herzfeldt, R., 2008. Learning orientation,organizational commitment and talent retention across genera-tions: A study of European managers.. *Journal of Managerial Psycholog,* pp. 23(8), 929-953.

Da, S. et al., 2022. To Change or Not to Change: A Study of Workplace Change during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health,* 19(4).

Davidescu, A. A., Apostu, S.-A., Paul, A. & Casuneanu, I., 2020. Work Flexibility, Job Satisfaction, and Job Performance among Romanian Employees—Implications for Sustainable Human Resource Management. *Sustainability,* 12(6086).

Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., Nachreiner, F. & Schaufeli, W., 2001. The job demandsresources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* Volume 86, pp. 499-512.

Dencker, J., Joshi, A. & Martocchio, J., 2008. Towards a theoretical framework linking generational memories to work?place attitudes and behaviors. *Human Resource Management Review,* Volume 18, p. 180–187.

Denzin, N., 1988. *The Research Act.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Department of Information (DOI) Malta, 2021. *PR210210en: PRESS RELEASE BY THE MINISTER WITHIN THE OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER: "The changes in labour law will not only implement a European directive, but will also positively affect the quality of life of employees and families".* Malta, DOI.

Department of Information (DOI), 2021. *First Remote Working Policy launched in the Public Service (Press Release),* s.l.: Government Services and Information.

DeSimone, K., 2020. Beyond gender: reconceptualizing understandings of work–life balance and the extreme work model for 21st-century high-potential top earners. *Journal of Organizational Change Management,* 33(6), pp. 1071-1084.

Dettmers, J., Kaiser, S. & Fietze, S., 2013. Theory and Practice of Flexible Work: Organizational and Individual Perspectives. Introduction to the Special Issue. *Management Revue,* pp. 24(3), 155-161.

Dettmers, J., Kaiser, S. & Fietze, S., 2013. Theory and Practice of Flexible Work: Organizational and Individual Perspectives. Introduction to the Special Issue. *Management Revue,* 24(3), pp. 155-161.

Diener, E., Suh, E. M., Lucas, R. & Smith, H., 1999. Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. *Psychological Bulletin,* 125(2), p. 276–302.

Diener, E. et al., 2009. New Measures of Well-Being. In: *Assessing Well-Being: The Collected Works of Ed Diener .* s.l.:Springer, pp. 247-266).

Diener, E. et al., 2009. New measures of well-being: Flourishing and Positive and Negative Feelings.. In: *Assessing Well-Being.* s.l.:Springer, pp. 247-266.

Donovan, A., 2019. What PwC Learned from Its Policy of Flexible Work for Everyone. *Harvard Business Review: Personnel Policies*, 28 January.

Earle, A., Mokomane, Z. & Heymann, J., 2011. Lessons from the world's most competitive economies. Future of Children. *International perspectives on work-family policies,* pp. 191-210.

Edgell, S. & Granter, E., 2020. *The Sociology of Work: Continuity and Change in Paid and Unpaid Work.* 3 ed. London: SAGE.

Eikhof, D. R., Warhurst, C. & Haunschild, A., 2007. Introduction: What Work? What Life? What Balance? Critical Reflections on the Work-life Balance Debate. *Employee Relations,* 29(4).

Eldridge, J., 1971. *Sociology and Industrial Life.* London: Michael Joseph.

Emerson, R., 1979. Social exchange theory. *Annual Review of Sociology,* Volume 2, pp. 335-362.

Ensaria, M. & Karabay, M. E., 2014. What Helps to Make SMEs Successful in Global Markets?. *Social and Behavioral Sciences,* p. 150 (2014) 192 – 201 .

EPP Group, 2019. *Casa's Work Life Balance Directive to Become EU Law.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.eppgroup.eu/how-we-make-it-happen/with-eu-countries/malta/news/a-victory-for-families-across-the-european-union-casa
[Accessed 12 April 2021].

EURES, 2020. *Living and working conditions - Spain,* s.l.: s.n.

Eurofound , 2021. *Subjective well-being.* [Online]

Available at: https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/topic/subjective-well-being

[Accessed 09 September 2021].

Eurofound, 2017. *6th Edition European Working Conditions Survey (Overview Report),* s.l.: s.n.

Eurofound, 2022. *Living and working in Malta.* [Online]

Available at: https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/country/malta#worklife-balance

[Accessed 29 May 2022].

European Commission, 2010. *Europe 2020: A European Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.,* Brussels : s.n.

European Commission, 2019. *2019 SBE Fact Sheet Malta,* Brussels: s.n.

European Commission, 2019. *Continuing Professional Development for Academic Staff Working in Higher Education,* s.l.: s.n.

European Commission, n.d. Sweden - Parental benefits and benefits related to childbirth. *Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion*.

Eurostat, 2021. *Average number of usual weekly hours of work in main job, by sex, professional status, full-time/part-time and occupation (hours),* s.l.: s.n.

Eyerman, R. & Turner, B., 1998. Outline of a theory of generations. *European Journal of Social Theory,* Volume 1, p. 91–106.

Fein, E. C., Skinner, N. & Machin, M. A., 2017. Work Intensification, Work–Life Interference, Stress, and Well-Being in Australian Workers. *International Studies of Management & Organization,* 47(4), pp. 360-371.

Field, J. C. & Chan, X. W., 2018. Contemporary Knowledge Workers and the Boundaryless Work–Life Interface: Implications for the Human Resource Management of the Knowledge Workforce. *Frontiers in Psychology,* 9(2414).

Flecker, J., Fibich, T. & Kraemer, K., 2019. Socio-Economic Changes and the Reorganization of Work . In: C. Korunka & B. Kubicek, eds. *Job Demands in a Changing World of Work: Impact on Workers' Health and Performance and Implications for Research and Practice.* s.l.:Springer International Publishing, pp. 7-24.

FRA: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights , 2020. *Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak in the EU Fundamental Rights Implications,* s.l.: The People for Change Foundation.

Fredrickson, B., 2004. The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences,* 359(1449), pp. 1367-1378.

Fuller, S. & Hirsh, C., 2019. "Family friendly" jobs and motherhood career penalties: The impact of flexible work arrangements across the educational spectrum. *Work and Occupations,* Volume 46, pp. 3-44.

Galinsky, E., Saka, K. & Wigton, T., 2011. Workplace flexibility: From research to action. Future of Children. *Future Child,* 21(2), pp. 141-61.

Galletta, M., Portoghese, I. & Battistelli, A., 2011. Intrinsic Motivation, Job Autonomy and Turnover Intention in the Italian Healthcare: The Mediating Role of Affective Commitment. *Journal of Management Research ,* 3(2).

Gallie, D., 1978. *In Search of the New Working Class: Automation and Social.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Galvez, A., Martinez, M. J. & Perez, C., 2011. Telework and Work-Life Balance: Some dimensions for organisational change. *Workplace Rights,* 16(3-4), pp. 273-297.

Gazioglu, S. & Tansel, A., 2006. Job Satisfaction in Britain: Individual and Job Related Factors. *Applied Economics,* 38(10), pp. 1163-1171.

Golden, T. D. & Veiga, J. F., 2018. Self-Estrangement's Toll on Job Performance: The Pivotal Role of Social Exchange Relationships With Coworkers. *Journal of Management,* 44(4), p. 1573–1597.

Gould-Williams, J. & Davies, F., 2005. Using social exchange theory to predict the effects of hrm practice on employee outcomes: An analysis of public sector workers. *Public Management Review,* 7(1), pp. 1-24.

Grant Thornton Malta and Dhalia Real Estate, 2022. *The Malta Property Landscape: a true picture,* s.l.: s.n.

Grawitch, M. J. & Barber, L. K., 2010. Work flexibility or nonwork support? Theoretical and empirical distinctions for work-life initiatives. *Consulting Psychology Journal Practice and Research,* 62(3).

Grawitch, M. J., Barber, L. K. & Justice, L., (in press). *Re-thinking the work–life interface: It's not about balance, it's about resource allocation.* s.l.:s.n.

Greenhill, A. & Wilson, M., 2006. Haven or hell? Telework, flexibility and family in the e-society: a Marxist analysis. *European Journal of Information Systems,* pp. 379-388.

Guest, D. E. & Conway, N., 2004. *Employee WellBeing and the Psychological Contract: A Research Report for CIPD.* London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Hall, D. T. & Richter, J., 1988. Balancing Work Life and Home Life: What Can Organizations Do to Help?. *The Academy of Management Executive,* pp. Vol. 2, No. 3 pp. 213-223.

Hamadamin, H. H. & Atan, T., 2019. The Impact of Strategic Human Resource Management Practices on Competitive Advantage Sustainability: The Mediation of Human Capital Development and Employee Commitment. *Sustainability,* pp. 11, 5782.

Hamilton, C. & Denniss, R., 2005. *Affluenza: When Too Much is Never Enough.* Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin .

Hayden, A., 2006. France's 35-Hour Week: Attack on Business? Win-Win Reform? Or Betrayal of Disadvantaged Workers?. *Politics & Society,* 34(4), pp. 503-542.

Haynes, B. P., 2011. The impact of generational differences on the workplace. *Journal of Corporate Real Estate,* pp. Vol. 13, Iss. 2.

Haynes, B. P., Suckley, L. & Nunnington, N., 2019. Workplace alignment: An evaluation of office worker flexibility and workplace provision. *Facilities,* 37(13), pp. 1082-1103.

Henderson, L. & Knight, T., 2012. Integrating the hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives to more comprehensively understand wellbeing and pathways to wellbeing. *International Journal of Wellbeing,* 2(3), pp. 196-221.

Hill, E. J. et al., 2008. Defining and conceptualizing workplace flexibility. *Community, Work and Family ,* 11(2), pp. 149-163.

Hill, S., 1981. *Competition and Control at Work.* London: Heinemann.

Hofmans, J., Gieter, S. D. & Pepermans, R., 2013. Individual differences in the relationship between satisfaction with job rewards and job satisfaction. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 82(1).

Holland, P. & Bardoel, A., 2016. The impact of technology on work in the twenty-first century: exploring the smart and dark side. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management ,* 27(21), pp. 2579-2581.

Holland, P. J., Cooper, B. & Hecker, R., 2015. Electronic monitoring and surveillance in the workplace: The effects on trust in management, and the moderating role of occupational type. *Personnel Review ,* 44(1), pp. 161-175.

Homans, G. C., 1961. *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms.* s.l.:Harcourt, Brace, and World.

Human Rights Directorate, 2019. *Work-Life Balance.* [Online]
Available at: https://humanrights.gov.mt/en/Pages/Gender%20Equality/European%20Affairs/Work-Life-Balance.aspx#:~:text=The%20Directive%20of%20Work%2DLife,of%20both%20men%20and%20women.
[Accessed 2022 May 29].

Humphrey, S. E., Nahrgang, J. D. & Morgeson, F. P., 2007. Integrating motivational, social, and contextual work design features: A meta-analytic summary and theoretical extension of the work design literature. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 92(5), pp. 1332-1356.

Hyland, M. M. & Rau, B. L., 2002. Role Conflict and Flexible Work Arrangements: The Effects on Applicant Attraction. *Personnel Psychology,* 55(1), pp. 111 - 136.

Idris, A., 2014. Flexible Working as an Employee Retention Strategy in Developing Countries: Malaysian Bank Managers Speak. *Journal of Management Research,* pp. Vol. 14, Iss. 2: 71-86.

International Labour Organization, 2020. *Teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond: A Practical Guide,* Geneva: s.n.

Jensen, J. M. & Ravar, J. L., 2012. When Self-Management and Surveillance Collide: Consequences for Employees' Organizational Citizenship and Counterproductive Work Behaviors. *Group and Organizational Management,* 37(3), pp. 308-346.

Johnson, S., Robertson, I. & Cooper, C. L., 2018. *Well-Being; Productivity and Happiness at Work.* 2 ed. s.l.:Springer International Publishing.

Joshi, A., Dencker, J. & Franz, G., 2011. Generations in organizations. *Research in Organizational Behavior,* Volume 31, p. 177–205.

Joubert, M. & Roodt, G., 2019. Conceptualising and measuring employee engagement as a role-related, multi-level construct. *Independent Research Journal in the Management Sciences,* 19(1), p. a605.

Kahn, W. A., 1990. Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work. *The Academy of Management Journal 692-724,* pp. Vol. 33, No. 4, pp..

Kain, J. & Jex, S., 2010. Karasek's (1979) job demands-control model: A summary of current issues and recommendations for future research. *New Developments in Theoretical and Conceptual Approaches to Job Stress,* Volume 8.

Kalliath, T. & Brough, P., 2008. Work–life balance: A review of the meaning of the balance construct. *Journal of Management & Organization,* Volume 14, p. 323–327..

Karasek, R., 1979. Job demands, job decision latitude, and mental strain: Implications for job redesign. *Administrative Science Quarterly,* Volume 24.

Kashdan, T., Biswas-Diener, R. & King, L., 2008. Reconsidering happiness: the costs of distinguishing between hedonics and eudaimonia. *The Journal of Positive Psychology,* 3(4), pp. 219-233.

Keeman, A., Näswall, K., Malinen, S. & Kuntz, J., 2017. Employee Wellbeing: Evaluating a Wellbeing Intervention in Two Settings. *Frontiers in Psychology ,* 8(505).

Kelliher, C. & Anderson, D., 2009. Doing more with less? Flexible working practices and the intensification of work. *Human Relations ,* 63(1), pp. 84-106.

Kelliher, C., Richardson, J. & Boiarintseva, G., 2018. All of work? All of life? Reconceptualising work-life balance for the 21st century. *Human Resources Management Journal.*

Kessler, S. R. et al., 2020. Job satisfaction and firm performance: Can employees' job satisfaction change the trajectory of a firm's performance?. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology,* pp. 563-572.

Khan, M. A. S. et al., 2019. Rejuvenating The Concept Of Work Alienation Through Job Demands-Resources Model And Examining Its Relationship With Emotional Exhaustion And Explorative And Exploitative Learning. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management,* Volume 12, p. 931–941.

Klindzic, M. & Maric, M., 2017. *Flexible Work Arrangments and Organizational Performance: The difference between Employee and Employer dirven practices,* Zagreb: Faculty of Economics and Business.

Kloss, B., 2018. Attraction & Retention: Millennial Engagement - Part II. *Employee Benefit Plan Review,* pp. Vol. 72, Iss. 5, 20-22.

Konrad, A. M. & Young, Y., 2012. Is using work-life interface benefits a career-limiting move? An examination of women, men, lone parents, and parents with partners. *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* Volume 33, pp. 1095-1119.

Korunka, C. & Kubicek, B., 2017. *Job Demands in a Changing World of Work.* Vienna: Springer.

Kossek, E. E. & Lambert, S. J., 2005. *Work and life integration : organizational, cultural, and individual perspectives.* s.l.:Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Kowske, B. J., Rasch, R. & Wiley, J., 2010. Millennials' (Lack of) Attitude Problem: An Empirical Examination of Generational Effects on Work Attitudes. *Journal of Business Psychology,* Volume 25, p. 265–279.

Kozhina, A. & Vinokurov, L., 2020. Work Alienation During COVID-19: Main Factors and Conditions (An Example of University Professors). *Psychology in Russia: State of the Art,* 13(4), pp. 106-118.

Kreiner, G., Hollensbe, E. & M.LSheep, 2009. Balancing borders and bridges: Negotiating the work-home interface via boundary work tactics.. *Academy of management journal,* 52 (4), pp. 704-730..

Kubicek, B., Paškvan, M. & Bunner, J., 2017. The Bright and Dark Sides of Job Autonomy. In: C. Korunka & B. Kubicek, eds. *Job Demands in a Changing World of Work.* s.l.:Springer, pp. 45-63.

Kumar, P. & Padhi, N., 2021. Development and validation of multi-factor employee engagement measuring instrument: a formative measurement model. *Personnel Review,* ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print), pp. ahead-of-print.

Kupperschmidt, B. R., 2000. Multigeneration employees: Strategiesfor effective management. *The Health Care Manager,* pp. 19(1),65–76..

Lal, B. & Dwivedi, Y. K., 2009. Homeworkers' usage of mobile phones; social isolation in the home-workplace. *Journal of Enterprise Information Management; ,* pp. Vol. 22, Iss. 3: 257-274..

Leahey, E., 2007. Convergence and confidentiality? Limits to the implementation of mixed methodology. *Social Science Research,* pp. Volume 36, Issue 1, Pages 149-158.

Long, C. S., Ajagbe, M. A., Nor, K. M. & Suleiman, E. S., 2012. The Approaches to Increase Employees' Loyalty: A Review on Employees' Turnover Models. *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences,* 6(10), pp. 282-291.

Lund, T., 2012. Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches: Some Arguments for Mixed Methods Research. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research,* 56(2), p. 155 – 165.

Lyons, S. & Kuron, L., 2014. Generational differences in the workplace. *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* Volume 35, p. 139–157.

MacDermid, S. M., 2005. (Re)Considering Conflict Between Work and Family. In: *Work and Life Integration: Organizational, Cultural, and Individual Perspectives.* s.l.:s.n., pp. 19-40.

Macky, K., Gardner, D. & Forsyth, S., 2008. Generational differences at work: Introduction and Overview. *Journal of Managerial Psychology,* pp. 23, 857-861.

Malta Employers' Association (MEA), 2020. *Position Paper on Teleworking & Remote Working Arrangements: A Balanced and Informed Approach,* Valletta: s.n.

Mannheim, K., 1952. Essays on the sociology of knowledge. *The problem of generations. ,* p. 276–322.

Martin, C. A., 2005. From high maintenance to high productivity: What managers need to know about Generation Y. *Industrial and Commercial Training,* pp. 39-44.

Martin, L. L., Ward, D. W., Achee, J. W. & Wyer, R. S., 1993. Mood as input: People have to interpret the motivational implications of their moods. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* pp. 64, 317326..

Ma, X., 2018. The effect mechanism of work flexibility on employee job satisfaction. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series,* 1053(1), pp. 1-7.

MCC: The Malta Chamber of Commerce, 2021. *Confidence Index Report & Global Comparison,* s.l.: Vistage Malta.

MCC: The Malta Chamber of Commerce, 2021. *National Workforce Strategy: Policy Recommendations,* s.l.: RSM.

Mcnall, L. A., Masuda, A. & Nicklin, J. M., 2010. Flexible Work Arrangements, Job Satisfaction, and Turnover Intentions: The Mediating Role of Work-to-Family Enrichment. *The Journal of Psychology Interdisciplinary and Applied ,* 144(1), pp. 61-81.

MEDE, 2014. *National Research and Innovation Strategy 2020,* s.l.: s.n.

Ministry of Finance , 2019. *Malta National Reform Programme,* s.l.: s.n.

Mobley, W. H., 1977. Intermediate linkages in the relationship between job satisfaction and employee turnover. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 62(2), p. 237–240.

Moen, P., Kelly, E. L., Tranby, E. & Huang, Q., 2011. Changing Work, Changing Health: Can Real Work-Time Flexibility Promote Health Behaviors and Well-Being?. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior,* 54(2), pp. 404-429.

Morgeson, F. & Humphrey, S. E., 2006. The Work Design Questionnaire (WDQ): Developing and Validating A Comprehensive Measure for Assessing Job Design and the Nature of Work. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 91(6), pp. 1321-39.

Moss, P., Salzman, H. & Tilly, C., 2005. When Firms Restructure: Understanding Work-Life Outcomes . In: *Work and Life Integration: Organizational, Cultural, and Individual Perspectives.* s.l.:s.n., pp. 127-150.

Mulvaney, M. A., 2014. Leave Programs/Time Off and Work-Stress Family Employee Benefits Programs, Organizational Commitment, and Self-Efficacy Among Municipal Employees. *Public Personnel Management,* 43(4), pp. 459-489.

Musto, M., 2010. Revisiting Marx's Concept of Alienation. *Socialism and Democracy,* 24(3), pp. 79-101.

Myers, K. K. & Sadaghiani, K., 2010. Millennials in the Workplace: A Communication Perspective on Millennials' Organizational Relationships and Performance. *Journal of Business and Psychology,* pp. 225-238.

Naim, M. F., 2018. Tap the Experienced to Care for the Inexperienced: Millennial Employees' Retention Challenge? Mentoring is the Solution. *Psychology of Retention,* p. 379–393.

Ng, E. S. & Parry, E., 2016. Multigenerational Research in Human Resource Management. *Personnel and Human Resources Management,* pp. 34, 1-41.

Noble, S. M. & D.Schewe, C., 2003. Cohort segmentation: An exploration of its validity.. *Journal of Business Research,* pp. 56, 979-987.

NSO: National Statistics Office, 2003. *Labour Force Survey,* Valletta: s.n.

NSO: National Statistics Office, 2016. *Trends in Malta,* Valletta: s.n.

NSO: National Statistics Office, 2020. *Labour Force Survey Q3/2020,* Valletta: s.n.

NSO: National Statistics Office, 2020. *Labour Force Survey: Q2/2020,* Valletta: National Statistics Office.

NSO: National Statistics Office, 2020. *Registered Employment: December 2019,* Valletta: s.n.

NSO: National Statistics Office, 2020. *Social and Economic Impact of COVID-19: January-June 2020,* Valletta: s.n.

NSO: National Statistics Office, 2020. *The Effect of COVID-19 on the Labour Market,* Valletta: s.n.

NSO: National Statistics Office, 2021. *Working Time Flexibility: 2019,* Valletta: s.n.

O'Connor, J., 2018. The Impact of Job Satisfaction on the Turnover Intent of Executive Level Central Office Administrators in Texas Public School Districts: A Quantitative Study of Work Related Constructs. *Education Sciences,* 8(69).

O'Donohue, W. & Nelson, L., 2014. Alienation. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis,* 22(3), pp. 301-316.

Origo, F. & Pagani, L., 2008. Workplace flexibility and job satisfaction: some evidence from Europe. *International Journal of Manpower,* 29(6), pp. 539-566.

PAHRO: Public Administration HR Office, 2010. *Family-Friendly Report 2010,* s.l.: s.n.

Park, R. & Jang, S., 2015. Mediating role of perceived supervisor support in the relationship between job autonomy and mental health: moderating role of value–means fit. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* pp. 1-21.

Paustian-Underdahl, S. C., Halbesleben, J. R. B., Carlson, D. S. & Kacmar, K. M., 2016. The Work–Family Interface and Promotability: Boundary Integration as a Double-Edged Sword. *Journal of Management,* 42(4), p. 960–981.

Pedersen, V. & Jeppesen, H., 2012 . Contagious flexibility? A study on whether schedule flexibility facilitates work-life enrichment.. *Scandinavian journal of psychology,* 53(4), pp. 347-59.

People and Standards Divsion, 2019. *Family-Friendly Report 2019,* s.l.: Institute for the Public Services.

Peterson, C., Seligman, M. E. P. & Vaillant, G. E., 1988. Pessimistic explanatory style is a risk factor for physical illness: A thirty-five year longitudinal study.. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* Volume 55, p. 23–27.

Polonsky, M. J. & Waller, D. S., 2011. *Designing and Managing a Research Project: A Business Student's Guide.* s.l.:SAGE.

Popescu, A., 2019. The brief history of generation – defining the concept of generation. An analysis of literature review. *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology,* 10(2), p. 15 – 30.

Powell, G. N. & Greenhaus, J., 2003. Sex, gender, and the work-to-family interface: Exploring negative and positive interdependencies. *Academy of Management Journal,* Volume 53, pp. 513-534.

Pyoria, P., 2011. Managing telework: risks, fears and rules. *Management Research Review,* 34(4), pp. 386-699.

Pyoria, P., S. O., Saari, T. & Järvinen, K.-M., 2017. The Millennial Generation: A New Breed of Labour?. *SAGE Open,* 7(1), pp. 1-14.

Reiter, N., 2007. Work Life Balance: What DO You Mean? The Ethical Ideology Underpinning Appropriate. *The journal of applied behavioural science,* p. Vol. 43 No. 2.

Rentsch, J. R. & Steel, R. P., 1992. Construct and concurrent validation of the Andrews and Withey job satisfaction questionnaire. *Educational and Psychological Measurement,* 52(2), p. 357–367.

Rizzo, S., 2004. *Work-Life Balance with Focus on Family Life,* s.l.: Workers' Participation Development Centre in conjunction with the Malta Employers' Association (MEA).

Ross, D. S. & Vasantha, D. S., 2014. A conceptual study on impact of stress on work-life balance. *Sai Om Journal of Commerce & Management - A Peer Reviewed National Journal,* 1(2), pp. 61-65.

Rousseau, D. M., 1997. Organizational Behavior in the New Organizational Era. *Annual Review of Psychology,* 1(48), pp. 515-46.

Rudolph, C., 2015. A note on the folly of cross-sectional operationalizations of generations. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology,* Volume 8, p. 362–366.

Russell, H., O'Connell, P. J. & McGinnity, F., 2009. The Impact of Flexible Working Arrangements on Work–life Conflict and Work Pressure in Ireland. *Gender, Work and Organisation,* 16(1), pp. 73-97.

Russo, G., 2012. Job and Life Satisfaction Among Part-time and Full-time Workers: The "Identity" Approach. *Review of Social Economy,* 70(3), pp. 315-343.

Ryan, R. M. & Deci, E. L., 2000. Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *The American Psychologist,* Volume 55, p. 68–78.

Ryder, N., 1965. The Cohort as a Concept in the Study of Social Change. *American Sociological Review,* 30(6), pp. 843-861.

Ryff, C., 1989. Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* Volume 57, p. 1069–1081.

Ryff, C., 1989. Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being.. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 57(6), p. 1069–1081.

Ryff, C. D. & Keyes, C. L. M., 1995. The structure of psychological well-being revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* Volume 69, p. 719–727.

Saane, N. v., Sluiter, J. K., Verbeek, J. H. & Frings-Dresen, M. H. W., 2003. Reliability and validity of instruments measuring job satisfaction - A systematic review. *Occupational Medicine ,* 53(3), pp. 191-200.

Sammut, E., 1990. dddddddddddddd. *dddddd,* f(f), p. f.

Schaufeli, W. B. & Bakker, A. B., 2010. Defining and measuring work engagement: Bringing clarity to the concept. In: A. B. Bakker & M. P. Leiter, eds. *Work Engagement: A Handbook of Essential Theory and Research.* East Sussex: Psychology Press, pp. 10-24.

Schaufeli, W. B. et al., 2017. An Ultra-Short Measure for Work Engagement: TheUWES-3 Validation Across Five Countries. *European Journal of PsychologicalAssessment,* Volume 35.

Sennett, R., 1998. *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism.* New York: W. W. Norton.

Settoon, R. P., Bennett, N. & Liden, R. C., 1996. Social Exchange in Organizations: Perceived Organizational Support, Leader-Member Exchange, and Employee Reciprocity. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* pp. 81(3):219-227.

Shahnawaz, M. & Goswamy, K., 2011. Effect of Psychological Contract Violation on Organizational Commitment, Trust and Turnover Intention in Private and Public Sector Indian Organizations. *The Journal of Business Perspective,* 15(3), p. 209–217.

Sheather, J. & Slattery, D., 2021. The great resignation—how do we support and retain staff already stretched to their limit?. *British Medical Journal,* Volume 375.

Simon, H. A. & March, J. G., 1958. *Organizations.* s.l.:Wiley.

Smith, P. C., Kendall, L. M. & Hulin, C. L., 1969. *The measurement of satisfaction in work and retirement: A strategy for the study of attitudes..* Chicago: Rand Mcnally.

Smola, K. & Sutton, C., 2002. Generational differences: Revisiting generational work values for the new millennium.. *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* Volume 23, p. 363–382.

Spiteri, G. & Xuereb, R. B., 2012. Going back to work after childbirth: women's lived experiences. *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology ,* 30(2).

Strauss, W. & Howe, N., 1991. *Generations : The History of America's future, 1584 to 2069.* New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc..

Strazdins, L. et al., 2004. Job strain, job security, and health: Rethinking the relationship.. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology,* pp. 9, 443-475.

Sutton, K. L. & Noe, R. A., 2005. Family-Friendly Programs and Work-Life Integration: More Myth Than Magic?. In: E. E. Kossek & S. J. Lambert, eds. *Work and Life Integration: Organizational, Cultural, and Individual Perspectives.* s.l.:s.n., pp. 151-169.

The Guardian, 2018. *German minister calls for anti-stress law ban on emails out of office hours.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/aug/29/germany-anti-stress-law-ban-on-emails-out-of-office-hours
[Accessed 10 April 2021].

Timms, C., Brough, P., Siu, O. L. & O'Driscoll, M., 2015. Cross-cultural impact of work-life balance on health and work outcomes.. *Handbook of research on work-life balance in Asia ,* p. 295–314.

Turner, P., 2019. *Employee Engagement in Contemporary Organizations: Maintaining High Productivity and Sustained Competitiveness.* Cham: Springer.

Twenge, J., 2010. A review of the empirical evidence on generational differences in work attitudes. *Journal of Business and Psychology,* Volume 25, pp. 201-210.

Union, E., 2019. *Work-life balance for all: Best practice examples from EU Member States,* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Voydanoff, P., 2005. Toward a Conceptualization of Perceived Work-Family Fit and Balance: A Demands and Resources Approach. *Journal of Marriage and Family,* 67(4), pp. 822-836.

Williams, L. & Jones, A., 2005. *Changing Demographics,* London: The Work Foundation.

Woschke, T., Haase, H. & Kratzer, J., 2017. Resource scarcity in SMEs: effects on incremental and radical innovations. *Management Research Review,* pp. Vol 40, Issue 2.

Wright, P. M. & McMahan, G. C., 1992. Theoretical perspectives for strategic human resource management. *Journal of Management,* pp. 18(2), 295–320.

Wright, P., Snell, S. A. & Dunford, B. B., 2001. Human Resources and the Resource Based View of the Firm. *Journal of Management,* p. 27 (6).

Yperen, N. W. V., Jonge, K. M. M. D. & Rietzschel, E. F., 2014. Blended Working: For Whom It May (Not) Work. *PLoS ONE,* 9(7).

Yucel, D., 2019. Job Autonomy and Schedule Flexibility as Moderators of the Relationship Between Work-Family Conflict and Work-Related Outcomes. *Applied Research in Quality of Life ,* Volume 14, p. 1393–1410.

Appendix A

Original scales used and adapted for the qualitative research

Flexible Work Arrangements scale

[1] Not offered but I don't need it

[2] Not offered but I could use it

[3] Offered but not used

[4] Offered and I use it

This scale was first presented in text by Tammy D. Allen in *Family-Supportive Work Environments: The Role of Organizational Perceptions* (2001, p. 421) and was also adapted by Timms et al. in *Flexible work arrangements, work engagement, turnover intentions and psychological health* (2015, p. 90).

Psychological Well-being scale

[1] I lead a purposeful and meaningful life

[2] My social relationships are supportive and rewarding

[3] I am engaged and interested in my daily activities

[4] I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others

[5] I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me

[6] I am a good person and live a good life

[7] I am optimistic about my future

[8] People respect me

The scale can be viewed in Diener et al.'s publication *New Well-Being Measures: Short Scales to Assess Flourishing and Positive and Negative Feelings* (2009, p. 154-155).

Employee Engagement scale

[1] At my work, I feel bursting with energy

[2] I am enthusiastic about my job

[3] I am immersed in my work

The scale can be viewed in text in Schaufeli et al.'s publication *An Ultra-Short Measure for Work Engagement* (2017, p. 580).

Job Satisfaction scale

[1] How do you feel about your job?

[2] How do you feel about the people you work with – your co-workers?

[3] How do you feel about the work you do on your job – the work itself?

[4] What is it like where you work – the physical surroundings, the hours, the amount of work you are asked to do?

[5] How do you feel about what you have available for doing your job – I mean equipment, information, good supervision, and so on?

The scale can be viewed in text in Rentsch and Steel's publication *Construct and Concurrent Validation of the Andrews and Withey Job Satisfaction Questionnaire* (1992, p. 359) and was originally seen in Andrews and Whitey's book *Social Indicators of Well-Being: American's perceptions of quality of life* (1976).

Intention to Leave scale

[1] I will probably look for a new job within a year

[2] I often think about leaving

[3] It is likely that I will actively look for a new job next year

The scale is from Cammann et al.'s *Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire* (1979).

Appendix B

Demographic details or participants in the pre-test and summary of changes made after the pre-test

Demographic profiles of the participants who took part in the pre-tests.

Participant	Age	Gender	Sector	Education	Nationality
1	born between 1946 and 1964	Female	Public	Diploma	Maltese
2	born between 1946 and 1964	Male	Private	Diploma	Maltese
3	born between 1965 and 1980	Female	Public	Diploma	Maltese
4	born between 1965 and 1980	Male	Public	MQF Level 8	Maltese
5	born between 1981 and 1996	Female	Private	MQF Level 7	Maltese
6	born between 1981 and 1996	Male	Private	Diploma	Non-Maltese
7	born in 1997 and over	Female	Public	Diploma	Maltese
8	born in 1997 and over	Male	Private	Vocational Studies	Maltese

Summary of issues and changes derived from the pre-testing exercise

Nature	Question Number	Issue	Change
Clarity	N/A	Respondent was unaware that certain questions were compulsory and did not understand why the survey software was not allowing them to move on to the next page.	The following text was added at the beginning of the questionnaire: 'All questions marked with an asterisk (*) are required'.
Language	12	Respondent commented that the structure of question four (4) in this section was not compatible with the scale as it did not ask for a feeling.	The question was changed from 'What is it like where you work?' to 'How do you feel about where you work?'
Time	N/A	A few respondents commented that the questionnaire was slightly too long to complete.	A decision by the researcher was made to remove a section originally inserted in the questionnaire about work-life balance (WLB). Since WLB is not part of the research questions, the researcher removed the section and discussed the topic during the focus groups.
Clarity	17	Respondent was unsure about the definition of 'flexitime' and what it includes.	The description text for this measure was updated from 'can choose the start/end time of your day' to 'Have some or full control over the time of your workday'.

Appendix C

Summary of demographic responses from the online questionnaire

Responses for Category: Sex

Options	No. of respondents	%
Male	193	34.1
Female	369	65.2
Other/Prefer not to say	4	0.7
Total	566	100

Responses for Category: Age group

Options	No. of respondents	%
born between 1946 and 1964	36	6.4
born between 1965 and 1980	187	33
born between 1981 and 1996	304	53.7
born in 1997 and later	39	6.9
Total	566	100

Responses for Category: Nationality

Options	No. of respondents	%
Maltese	483	85.3
Other (includes having a Maltese dual citizenship)	83	14.7
Total	566	100

Responses for Category: How long have non-Maltese respondents lived in Malta

Options	No. of respondents	%
0 – 5 years	34	41
5 – 10 years	15	18.1
10 – 15 years	7	8.4
15 years +	17	20.5
All my life	7	8.4
No response	3	3.6
Total	83	100

Responses for Category: Relationship status

Options	No. of respondents	%
In a relationship	75	13.3
In a relationship and living with partner	93	16.4
Married	255	45.1
Other/Prefer not to say	10	1.7
Single	133	23.5
Total	566	100

Responses for Category: Dependents

Options	No. of respondents	%
Yes	269	47.5
No	297	52.5
Total	566	100

Responses for Category: Sole breadwinner

Options	No. of respondents	%
Yes	125	22.1
No	441	77.9
Total	566	100

Responses for Category: Level of education

Options	No. of respondents	%
Secondary Education	26	4.6
Post-Secondary Education	59	10.4
Vocational Education	9	1.6
Diploma/MQF Level 5	73	12.9
Degree/MQF Level 6	146	25.8
Masters/MQF Level 7	195	34.5
Doctorate/MQF Level 8	58	10.2
Total	566	100

Responses for Category: Employment status

Options	No. of respondents	%
Full-time	520	91.8
Part-time	36	6.4
Employed but currently on a period of unpaid/paid leave	2	0.4
Other	8	1.4
Total	566	100

Responses for Category: Sector

Options	No. of respondents	%
Private	266	47
Public	300	53
Total	566	100

Responses for Category: Managerial responsibility

Options	No. of respondents	%
Yes	247	43.6
No	319	56.4
Total	566	100

Appendix D

Summary of responses for the questions pertaining to flexible work arrangements

Responses for Category: Time

	[1]	%	[2]	%	[3]	%	[4]	%	[0]	%
Flexitime	37	7%	122	22%	39	7%	349	62%	19	3%
Core Days	133	23%	212	37%	20	4%	150	27%	51	9%
Results-Based Professional Work	130	23%	266	47%	19	3%	93	16%	58	10%
Contingent Work	244	43%	136	24%	29	5%	60	11%	97	17%
Shift Work/Rotating Shifts/Weekend, Evening, Night Work	395	70%	74	13%	20	4%	53	9%	24	4%
Four Day Work Week/Compressed Work Week	141	25%	343	61%	13	2%	39	7%	30	5%

Responses for Category: Place

	[1]	%	[2]	%	[3]	%	[4]	%	[0]	%
Telework/Flex place or satellite offices	58	10%	118	21%	36	6%	345	61%	9	2%
Travel or Client Office work/Split Locations Regularly	301	53%	96	17%	49	9%	81	14%	39	7%
Informal telework and non-standard working time	130	23%	155	27%	43	8%	177	31%	61	11%

Responses for Category: Amount

	[1]	%	[2]	%	[3]	%	[4]	%	[0]	%
Job Sharing	370	65%	69	12%	17	3%	30	5%	80	14%
Reduced Hours/Reduced Load/Customised Work	161	28%	154	27%	142	25%	67	12%	42	7%
Part-time Work	198	35%	66	12%	181	32%	67	12%	54	10%
Temporary Layoffs/Shutdown/Required reduced or part-time hours	350	62%	43	8%	44	8%	43	8%	86	15%
Overtime	156	28%	141	25%	81	14%	160	28%	28	5%
Phased Retirement	184	33%	91	16%	52	9%	7	1%	232	41%
Work-study or coops	159	28%	83	15%	128	23%	69	12%	127	22%

Responses for Category: Continuity

	[1]	%	[2]	%	[3]	%	[4]	%	[0]	%
Short-term or long-term leaves/Sabbaticals	76	13%	138	24%	193	34%	47	8%	112	20%
Sick time or disability time off/Intermittent leave	47	8%	42	7%	220	39%	188	33%	69	12%
Part Year Work	208	37%	141	25%	47	8%	34	6%	136	24%

Appendix E

Profile Plots showing scores of work attitudinal outcomes in relation to flexible work arrangements for millennials and non-millennials
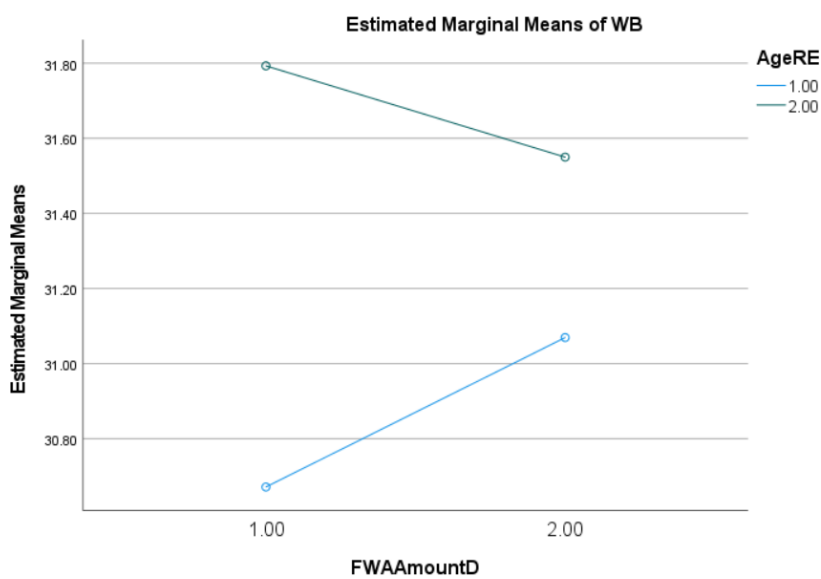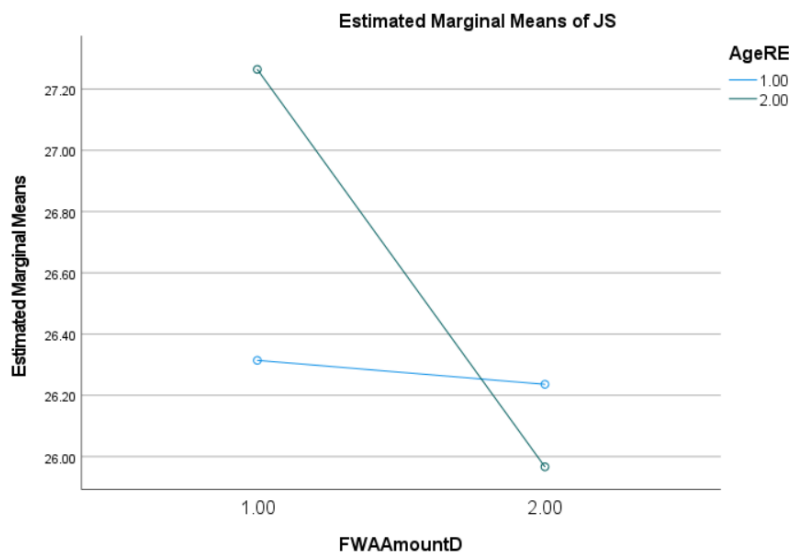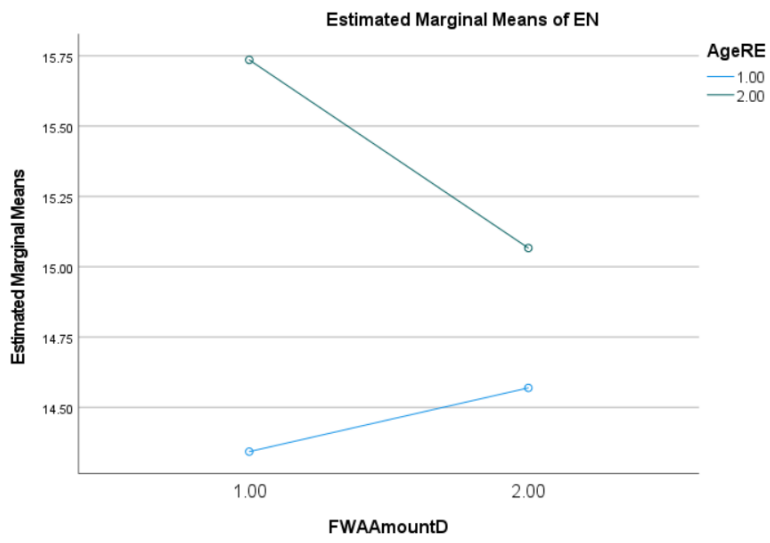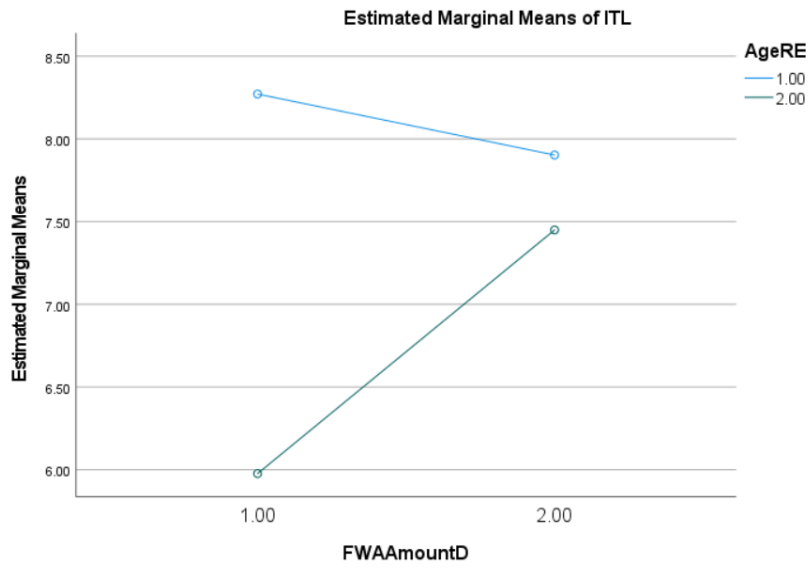
Codes for Pilot Plots

JS = Job Satisfaction

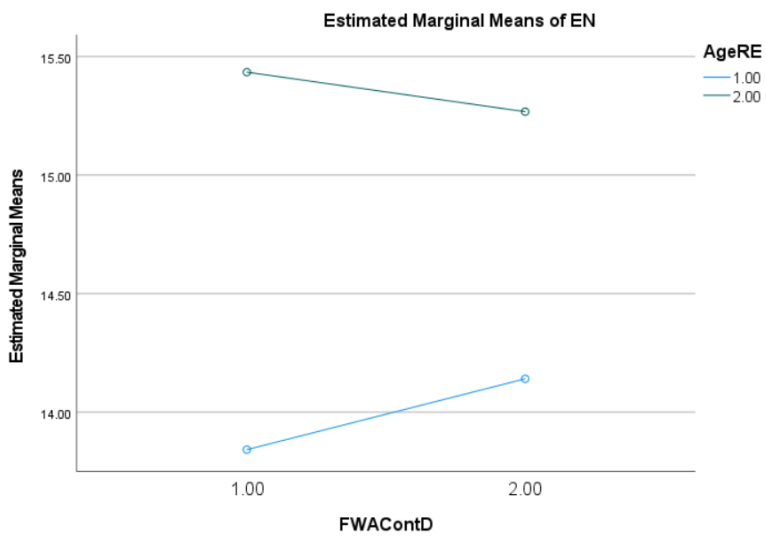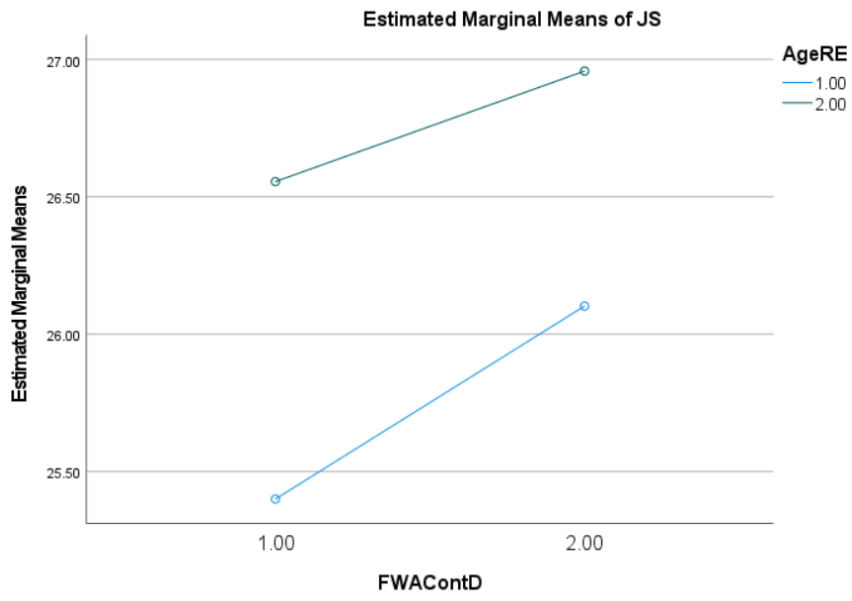EN = Engagement
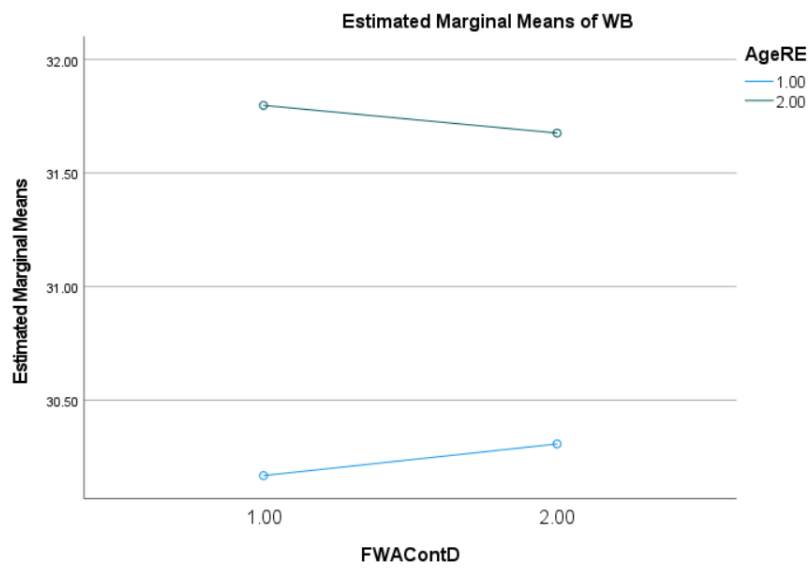
WB = Well-being

ITL = Intention to Leave

Millennials are coded as 1.00 and non-millennials are coded as 2.00 on the x-axis

Low scores are coded as 1.00 and high scores of work attitudinal outcomes are coded as 2.00) on the y-axis.

Estimated Marginal Means of ITL

Estimated Marginal Means of EN

Estimated Marginal Means of JS

Estimated Marginal Means of EN

Estimated Marginal Means of ITL

Estimated Marginal Means of WB

Estimated Marginal Means of EN

Estimated Marginal Means of WB

Estimated Marginal Means of ITL

Estimated Marginal Means of JS

Estimated Marginal Means of WB

Estimated Marginal Means of JS

Estimated Marginal Means of ITL

Estimated Marginal Means of EN

Appendix F

Consent Form for the questionnaire and focus group participation

Online Questionnaire consent text

By giving your consent, you are agreeing with the below:

I agree to participate in the data collection through the online questionnaire carried out by Eugenia Sammut of the University of Malta, to aid with the research on Flexible Work Arrangements;

I am aware that I will remain anonymous throughout the data reported;

I am participating in the questionnaire on voluntary basis;

I understand that the data collected follow the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Malta Data Protection Act 2018 and can access, rectify, and where applicable erase the data concerning myself.

◯ I give my consent

Focus groups consent text

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this focus group. The focus group is about the relationship between Flexible Work Arrangements and work attitudinal outcomes, namely: job satisfaction, employee engagement, employee well-being, and intention to remain. The focus group will ask for your views on the findings obtained from a questionnaire which investigated this relationship.

The focus group findings will feature in the dissertation I will be submitting as part of the University of Malta's assessment for the MA in Management by Research. All information will be kept confidential and identifiable information of participants will not feature in the study. The focus group will be recorded and transcribed for in-depth data analysis. The recordings and transcriptions will be erased upon completion of the study. The duration of the focus group should be around 45-60mins.

By signing this consent form, you will be agreeing to the below:

- I agree to participate in the focus group carried out by Eugenia Sammut of the University of Malta, to aid with the research on Flexible Work Arrangements;
- I have read the information sheet related to the research project and understand the aims of the project;
- I am aware that I will remain anonymous throughout the data reported;
- I am participating in this focus group on voluntary basis and understand that I have the right to leave the focus group at any point without giving a reason and without penalty;
- I agree to have the focus group recorded so it can be transcribed after it is held. I understand that the recording and transcription will be disposed of after the research is concluded and published;
- I understand that the data collected follow the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Malta Data Protection Act 2018 and can access, rectify, and where applicable erase the data concerning myself;
- I understand that I can ask for the findings of the research once they are concluded and published.

Name and Surname:

Date:

Signature:

Appendix G

Summary of responses from participants of the focus groups on what they thought was derived from the qualitative research

Respondent A	Job Satisfaction	Employee Engagement	Employee Well-being	Intention to Leave
Flexibility in Place	X	X	X	X*
Flexibility in Time	X	X	X	X*
Flexibility in Amount	X	X	X	X*
Flexibility in Continuity	X	X	X	X*

Respondent B	Job Satisfaction	Employee Engagement	Employee Well-being	Intention to Leave
Flexibility in Place	X	X	X	X*
Flexibility in Time	X		X	X*
Flexibility in Amount	X		X	X*
Flexibility in Continuity			X	X*

Respondent C	Job Satisfaction	Employee Engagement	Employee Well-being	Intention to Leave
Flexibility in Place	X		X	
Flexibility in Time	X		X	
Flexibility in Amount	X		X	
Flexibility in Continuity	X		X	

Respondent D	Job Satisfaction	Employee Engagement	Employee Well-being	Intention to Leave
Flexibility in Place	X	X	X	X*
Flexibility in Time	X	X	X	X*
Flexibility in Amount	X	X	X	X*
Flexibility in Continuity	X	X	X	X*

Respondent E	Job Satisfaction	Employee Engagement	Employee Well-being	Intention to Leave
Flexibility in Place	X			
Flexibility in Time	X		X	X
Flexibility in Amount	X		X	
Flexibility in Continuity	X		X	X

Respondent F	Job Satisfaction	Employee Engagement	Employee Well-being	Intention to Leave
Flexibility in Place		X	X	
Flexibility in Time	X			X
Flexibility in Amount	X			X
Flexibility in Continuity	X		X	X

Respondent G	Job Satisfaction	Employee Engagement	Employee Well-being	Intention to Leave
Flexibility in Place		X	X	
Flexibility in Time		X	X	
Flexibility in Amount			X	X
Flexibility in Continuity			X	X

Respondent H	Job Satisfaction	Employee Engagement	Employee Well-being	Intention to Leave
Flexibility in Place	X	X	X	
Flexibility in Time			X	
Flexibility in Amount			X	
Flexibility in Continuity			X	

Respondent I	Job Satisfaction	Employee Engagement	Employee Well-being	Intention to Leave
Flexibility in Place		X		
Flexibility in Time		X	X	
Flexibility in Amount				X
Flexibility in Continuity				

Respondent J	Job Satisfaction	Employee Engagement	Employee Well-being	Intention to Leave
Flexibility in Place	X		X	
Flexibility in Time	X	X	X	X
Flexibility in Amount	X		X	X
Flexibility in Continuity			X	

Respondent K	Job Satisfaction	Employee Engagement	Employee Well-being	Intention to Leave
Flexibility in Place	X	X	X	
Flexibility in Time		X	X	
Flexibility in Amount	X	X		X
Flexibility in Continuity			X	

Respondent L	Job Satisfaction	Employee Engagement	Employee Well-being	Intention to Leave
Flexibility in Place	X	X	X	
Flexibility in Time	X	X	X	
Flexibility in Amount	X		X	X
Flexibility in Continuity			X	X

Respondent M	Job Satisfaction	Employee Engagement	Employee Well-being	Intention to Leave
Flexibility in Place	X	X	X	
Flexibility in Time	X		X	
Flexibility in Amount	X	X		
Flexibility in Continuity			X	

Respondent N	Job Satisfaction	Employee Engagement	Employee Well-being	Intention to Leave
Flexibility in Place	X		X	
Flexibility in Time	X		X	
Flexibility in Amount	X	X	X	X
Flexibility in Continuity	X		X	

Respondent O	Job Satisfaction	Employee Engagement	Employee Well-being	Intention to Leave
Flexibility in Place	X	X*	X	X*
Flexibility in Time	X	X	X	X*
Flexibility in Amount	X*	X*	X*	X
Flexibility in Continuity	X	X	X	X*

Respondent P	Job Satisfaction	Employee Engagement	Employee Well-being	Intention to Leave
Flexibility in Place		X	X	
Flexibility in Time	X		X	
Flexibility in Amount	X		X	
Flexibility in Continuity			X	

Respondent Q	Job Satisfaction	Employee Engagement	Employee Well-being	Intention to Leave
Flexibility in Place	X		X	
Flexibility in Time	X	X	X	
Flexibility in Amount	X		X	X
Flexibility in Continuity			X	X

Respondent R	Job Satisfaction	Employee Engagement	Employee Well-being	Intention to Leave
Flexibility in Place				
Flexibility in Time	X		X	
Flexibility in Amount			X	
Flexibility in Continuity	X			

*indicates that the correlation is expected for intention to remain (not leave)

Appendix H

Summary of the contributions of each participant of the focus groups to the emerged themes.

Availability and usage of flexible work arrangements

Participant A said that his workplace is very flexible and that they can work anytime and anywhere if they complete their assigned tasks and work within the time zone that the company operates in since they can also work from abroad. They are not given overtime or asked to work over the weekend unless they work in specific departments which requires this.

Participant B mentioned that the main measure of flexibility allowed a one-hour leeway on when they can start the day which would then affect when they finish. She also mentioned that they have forced summer hours which means that they need to work longer hours in winter, stretching onto nine hours, to be able to work less in summer. She said that they are not able to request overtime even if there is enough work that requires them to stay later at the office. Although she works in the public sector which has several policies and regulations on work flexibility, her manager does not allow her to use them.

Participant C said that they have flexibility at the workplace but also mentions that as a manager, she is not able to offer the same measures for all her employees since there are not enough employees available to cover the full schedule needed for their clients. She said that if she works a forty-hour week or one-hundred and sixty hours in four weeks, she is able to work the hours as she wants to. She sometimes works overtime and weekends as well and has the option of either getting paid for the overtime or taking the extra hours as leave. She says that although flexibility measures may help one's work-life balance, there are also ways by which they can damage it – especially if they are forced on employees. She mentions the example of parents who during the pandemic had to work from home while juggling online schools. She also said that the measures can be a detrimental to one's personal life if the person is unable to set boundaries. She now makes it a point to switch off her laptop once her work is finished and also does not receive emails on her personal mobile phone. Although she likes flexibility and is flexible for her work, she does not want to create a 24/7 sort of habit around her worktime.

Participant D says that he does not work during the summer months. For the rest of the year, he is asked to choose a schedule in which he would be assigned lectures. Outside the lecturing hours, he does not have a fixed schedule and does not need to check in with

anyone to prove that he is working but instead has a timesheet where he is asked to fill in the work that was produced. He does not have the standard vacation leave but instead has leave of absence which is primarily allowed for work-related activities. After the pandemic, he was also given the flexibility on how the lectures are conducted since e-learning became more widespread. He mentions that sometimes it is beyond his control to work in the evening as he would be in contact with people in different time zones. He also says that although there might be laws or regulations which may seek to limit the 24/7 culture, those who are well paid or feel that it is their duty to work would still work outside their working hours.

Participant E does two jobs. She gives her availability for one of them, usually during the weekend, and the hours that she can work. In this job, she is also able to work from home but does not like that she needs to ask, feeling like she is begging them, to work from home. For the other job, she choses which shifts to work and goes to the office accordingly. In this job, she can swap shifts with her colleagues without issues. She mentions that at a certain point, she felt like she was given too much flexibility and too much control. She said that she was getting too distracted and needed more guidance as she felt that she wasn't being pushed or motivated enough to work nor was she given enough feedback on her work. She said that work flexibility should be able to help someone achieve a work-life balance as the measures are providing control over your life. However, she mentions that those who are well-paid and decide to work over and above their contracts are probably too scared not to be flexible for their job because they feel that they are expected to perform as high as their salary.

Participant F has two jobs. He has two hundred hours for one of them, which he needs to complete by a specific date. It does not matter when he does them, but he needs to do them at the workplace. The other job can be done on three specific dates at the workplace, and he can choose the dates he does it on. In this case, the hours are fixed. He also mentions that on a national level, the culture of having a shorter work week should become widespread as he thinks this would improve people's attitudes and wellbeing.

Participant G said that from an employee perspective, she is happy with her flexibility as it allows her to schedule her work around her personal commitments. They have recently moved to a forty-hour week, rather an eight-hour day in her company which gives her more

control over her time. However, as a manager, she sees the issues that crop up with the availability and usage of FWAs. She wants to be able to provide flexibility to her team but is also aware that some of the employees take advantage of the measures. She also mentions that scheduling meetings becomes increasingly difficult with people working in different time brackets and that because of flexitime, she is always on call as if an issue crops up while someone is working in the evening, the person will email her in the evening asking her to sort it out. She also mentions that her company has changed all their training courses to e-learning which she thinks is a positive change as this will allow employees to follow courses at their own pace and not in a strict classroom environment.

Participant H is a nurse and said that she has always had to work shifts, which she feels allowed her to have a career while taking care of her family. She mentioned that taking leave was a bit difficult since there always needs to be a replacement. She said it is imperative for companies to offer flexibility, such as reduced hours, as otherwise people will not be able to raise a family.

Participant I said that without flexibility, a company might as well close. In his work, he has to utilise people with non-fulltime contracts as the company does not require people to be there for the full working week but may need them for a few hours in the week. Initially, he also mentioned that he does not believe that the availability or usage of FWA have any effect on well-being. This opinion changed after the discussion where he said that he now sees how the two can be linked since FWA give you the opportunity to control your time. For this reason, he believes that FWA in time would be more beneficial than FWA in amount as the former is control on your everyday life while the latter may only happen infrequently. He also mentioned that in certain cases, there is no satisfying the employee. He gave an example of one of his previous jobs where he worked with people who would complain if they did not have overtime and then complain again if they had overtime for a long period.

Participant J said that those who have a job which is client-facing most probably felt the difference in the pandemic. Her company was already exercising flexible work before the pandemic but when it hit and work had to be done virtually, she noticed how people were not equipped to work remotely

– both in terms of equipment and also mentality. She believes that being flexible, especially with time, helps to improve someone's wellbeing as they are more able to manage their personal commitments.

Participant K said that he always worked in flexible workplaces and there are things that are good and others that are bad in such an environment. She said that she enjoys the flexibility of being able to stop from work and going for a coffee, for example, so long as the work that needed to be done is done. But she said that this flexible may come in between your personal commitments. She also said that she is aware that the employers expect her to flexible in return, and said that oftentimes she is contacted outside of work hours on work related matters.

Participant L said that in today's competitive market, companies no longer have the option of whether to make FWAs available or not. However, he believes that work was still being done before the surge of FWAs in Malta, so he thinks that in the measures are not imperative to completing one's job. He gives the example of parents who worked in a factory and who did not have any flexibility while still raising a family. He said that since flexibility was imposed on everyone during the pandemic, employees started demanding it. He said he can see how flexibility can improve work attitudes but not productivity because he believes that the main driver for employee productivity is the salary.

Participant M said that he is very flexible for his job. He said that whenever he was needed beyond the official hours, he would work without asking questions but then would also be flexible to change his time schedule to fit his personal commitments. He said that as a manager, he has always tried to provide flexibility to his employees. He also mentioned that flexibility measures in work continuity and amount can also affect attitudes of employees at work because a lot of these measures are part of the law and are taken for granted so if they are not available, employees will get frustrated.

Participant N said that her workplace was quite rigid. She said that the only reason she was allowed to change to reduced hours when she had her baby was because she threatened to leave. She said that when the pandemic hit, things became a bit more flexible. She said that now she can leave work to pick up her child, for example, and also choose the hours she works in a day. She mentioned that before the pandemic, if her son was sick, she would

have to take sick leave instead of working from home. She said that now her managers realised that it made more sense for the company to allow remote work if her son is sick so that in this way, she is still able to work instead of taking sick leave. She mentioned that because of her, her company also installed breastfeeding stations where she was able to pump her milk. She also said that the workweek should be shorter and that her job is proof. She said that she does the same amount of work as those who are on a full-time contract. She said that having a forty-hour week is too long and that it cannot lead to a WLB, even if you do not have children.

Participant O said that her workplace is flexible and that she has some control over her time and where she does her work. She mentioned that this is not always possible if she is needed at a client's house though. She said that when she works from home, she is not able to set boundaries and often keeps on working after her workday is over.

Participant P said that she works very long hours and that the main flexibility that she has at her workplace is to be able to leave work if she needs to do something personal, like pick up her children. She said that she is able to do this unless she is replacing someone that day. She said that she felt her work is affecting her personal life as she works too much and that this puts a strain on her family. She said that she is unable to set a boundary on when she leaves work because she has tight deadlines. She said that if she works late on one day, she would not be able to work less the next day. She believes that having flexibility can impact someone's wellbeing.

Participant Q works part-time. He said that he does not want to invest in a career just yet because he plans on travelling. He said that his current job allows him to have a WLB but also mentions that he uses non-work time to prepare for it though he said this does not affect him. He believes that flexibility is key to be able for your wellbeing and mental health because it give you control over your time. He said that employees are more likely to want to leave if they have a lot of work and if they face issues when requesting time off work, such as the case of asking for vacation or sick leave.

Participant R said that he does not have a lot of flexibility at his job since he works in a school. He also said that the workweek should be a thirty-hour week. He said that there is a lot of time wasted with it being longer and that people, and children, can only concentrate

for so long. He said the important thing would be for everyone to have the same conditions – if schools became shorter, the parents must also have shorter working hours.

Nature of work

Participant A said that depending on the job, people in his company are given the flexibility to choose where and when they do their work. Since his job can be done fully online, he is able to choose where he does it and when.

Participant B said that her job can be done fully online but that her manager is against remote working. She said that this is very demotivating as they were able to work from home without issues on productivity during the pandemic. She also mentioned that seeing other people in the public sector being able to utilise work flexibility is also very demotivating and contributes to her dissatisfaction with her job.

Participant C said that in the service sector, it is difficult to provide work flexibility as there are strict deadlines and the need to deliver in time. She mentions that those who have a warrant fare much better than the rest – for example, doctors or teachers – as they have many more opportunities than those without the necessary certification.

Participant D says that since he loves his job and believes in the work that he does, he feels empowered and eager to contribute more at the workplace.

Participant E mentions that she intends to leave one of her jobs as she does not feel like her work is contributing to anything and does not feel satisfied with what she is doing. She also feels that her superiors feel the same way.

Participant F said that he enjoys one of his jobs enough to not mind the lack of flexibility there is available to do it. He says that he always tries to find jobs that are flexible because he does not want them to interfere with his personal commitments. He mentions that he is part of an NGO and does voluntary work in the evenings, so he always looks for jobs with shifts or hours in the mornings. He also mentions that those who want to pursue careers in certain industries, such as the arts or education, are faced with few or limited opportunities which discourages them to continue these paths. He also mentions that labour jobs are largely ignored by the government and workers in these industries, such as the construction industry, are unrecognised.

Participant G explained that her company had run an exercise pre-pandemic which sought to see whether the different departments were ready to take one FWAs, primarily in place and time. The exercise for done for three years but the results were inconclusive since it much depended on the nature of the job and its department. She also mentioned that before the pandemic, when her workplace was very rigid and she was not allowed any flexibility to juggle her work, life, and studies, she was still satisfied at her workplace because she enjoyed the job that she was doing.

Participant H said that the nature of her job gives her satisfaction as she is able to help people and also see them progress. She feels engaged. She said that in the previous hospital, night shifts were very slow and boring but when they transitioned to the Mater Dei, night shifts were busy, and she enjoyed them as her job was to help people and she liked doing it. She said that to do this job you need passion and if you do not have it, you are not going to be happy.

Participant I said that the nature of the work will determine whether a person is satisfied or not at the workplace. He believes that irrelevant of the flexibility being offered, if the person does not like the job that he is doing, he will not happy, nor engaged.

Participant J mentioned that certain flexibility is not allowed in all industries and that this would affect how one perceive work. She gave the example of the construction industry who are entitled to less leave than the standard leave entitlement.

Participant K works for an NGO that is a voluntary organisation. Since her clients are those who face social problems, she cannot simply create a boundary between her work domain and her life domain. She said that if she is on leave and someone calls to come with a donation, she would drop everything and go. She said you cannot simply shut the door if there are clients with a problem, telling them that her working hours are over for the day. She also said that it depends on what kind of job is being done. For example, those who are working on a volunteer basis or only in summer will not have the same level of commitment as the full-timers.

Participant L said that it is irrelevant whether an employee has passion for the job at first – once reality kicks in of how demanding the work life is and also understands the salary expectations, they will become demotivated. He also said that the nature of the job and the

kind of salaries that are offered for it have become central to young people when they are looking at what to study. He mentioned that his niece, who wants to become a teacher, does not want to pursue a career in teaching as she knows that the salaries are too low to live a comfortable life.

Participant M said that the nature of his previous work did not allow him to shut down. He said that he dealt with human related issues and sometimes has had to work over the weekends and after working hours. He said he felt that he was making a difference, and this made him enjoy his work and want to go over and above his hours. When he changed his job and did not work directly with children, he made the decision to work over his schedule.

Participant N said that since she does not share the values of the work that she does and does not feel like she does an important job for society, she does not feel any engagement to her work. She said that she does her job for her salary and does not give any more of her personal resources to her job.

Participant O mentioned that she worked at an NGO and thus they have a common goal which creates an element of responsibility among the employee as they deal with human cases. She said that this results in her not having any WLB as she is completely dedicated to her job. She said that her job often comes in the way of her personal commitments. She mentioned that she had an emotionally taxing job and that mental-health days should become more common in Malta.

Participant P said that job satisfaction should not be affected by flexibility because it depends on whether you enjoy your job or not.

Participant Q said that due to the nature of his job, he is not able to have a lot of flexibility. He is a teacher which means that he is unable to choose the time and place he can work in. He also said that taking sick leave is not easy and that the management would chase you for a doctor's note for taking one day as sick leave. He said that to apply for sick leave, you must tell them two days before. He said that flexibility is much dependent on the nature of work and said that when he used to be a waiter, he had a lot of flexibility.

Participant R said that the nature of his job does not allow for much flexibility as he is an LSE. He said that he thinks it is quite rigid, especially when it comes to taking vacation leave.

He said that it is also difficult for him to not be available at work because he deals with children and he feels responsible for them. Since he is assigned specific children, he cannot be replaced so if he is feeling unwell, he would still make the effort to go to work.

Generations and mentality

Participant B describes how the rigid mentality of her manager creates a rigid workplace where flexibility (barring family friendly measures) is only allowed in extreme circumstances like the pandemic or being injured. Participant B also said that part of her demotivation at work is when she looks at her older colleagues, even those who are just ten years older. She said that they are comfortable in their position, which they have been in for years, and that they are also happy with their salary since they do not have a loan. She also feels that millennials, especially those pertaining to the older side of this age bracket, missed opportunities to study certain subjects like technology as they were not available or widely encouraged when she was young, especially for girls. She feels that these opportunities are laid out for the younger generation, who now have a lot more exposure on which careers make the most money. She does mention that tech opportunities are seemingly still gender related and not encouraged enough for women.

Participant C believes that millennials are the generation who are the most familiar with modern technology when compared to the older generations, since they grew up at its peak, and are also more demanding. She also believes that the younger generation, gen z, are even more demanding than millennials and expect to be given more with less work experience. She said that at this point, millennials would have all experienced work for a few years and came to the realisation that the work conditions are not ideal, and they are thus less motivated to work. She said that they are the generation who have less stability in their lives. She believes that millennials value their person time highly and would not want to work overtime, even if this time is paid. She also said that they would easily change jobs if they found a better salary.

Participant D says that generations before millennials had less opportunities to work and travel so millennials have a different mindset to them.

Participant E believes that the difference between millennials and other generations makes sense. She says that the millennials are not like the older generations who tend to stick to

the same employer as they are aware that they can move and find better opportunities elsewhere. She also said that the younger generation is still at the start of experiencing work and are not discouraged by its realities yet.

Participant F says that one of his managers prefers to have him on standby rather than letting him leave if the work is done while the other manager does not mind if he leaves before. Meanwhile, in his other job, his superior is very calm and does not work more than she needs to, so she does not expect him to do more. He also said that predominantly, the mentality in Malta is much too rigid and traditional which is not what workers, especially millennials, want. He also mentions how salaries have not increased while the purchasing power has decreased and so millennials are discouraged by work as they are forced to work to live. He thinks that the mentality in Malta on a government level is that of a 24/7 culture and it reflects in the labour market – never stops, always reaching out for more, pressure to work harder and without an end in sight.

Participant G said that employees have become entitled. They are expecting FWAs to be offered and used at the workplace. She said that this change in attitudes and sense of entitlement is affecting the dynamics of the team. She uses herself as an example as she remembers that the mentality at her workplace when she joined was very rigid. If she arrived a few minutes late, she would be asked to take those minutes as leave. She feels that Generation Z is very difficult to manage and to get them engaged in their job. She sees them as prioritising themselves over their work and no longer finding satisfaction in getting the work done right. She understands that generations bring change to the workplace and that management styles must adapt for these changes. She remembers when she joined and she was the 'new' generation, her managers regarded her as trouble and someone that will change their ways. And now it is happening again, with the new generation joining the market. She also said people are now extending their single or non-parent life longer. Whereas generations before may have had their children in their early twenties, people are now having them in their thirties which might mean that the grandparents are no longer able to care for the children while the parents go to work. She said that in some cases within her team, the company was not flexible enough to offer FWAs measures to people who became parents and they left the company.

Participant H said that she sees the younger generations as detriment to the medical industry. She said that most of the young people she works with do not want to do the practical work and feel that they are able to conduct their medical service through a computer. She said she sees this both in nursing staff and also in doctors. She mentions that this may be linked to how the courses are university are delivered, where the focus is on theory rather than practice. She said that the new mentality is bad and that there are very few young doctors who make it a point to visit patients and all the work falls onto those who do. She believes that the younger generations, both millennials and the Gen Z, want to become leaders but while bypassing the hard work.

Participant I blames older generation for creating false realities of what jobs are which have made millennials lose interest and have a lack of engagement in their jobs. He said that although millennials do have their issues, it is the mentality that affects how people perceive work and if a person is responsible, they will do the work well irrespective of the age.

Participant J said that she sees the difference between herself, a millennial, and the older generations as in certain cases they still insist that work is done face-to-face even when it could be done virtually. However, she believes that the major different will come in personality, not generations.

Participant K said that the young generation, also millennials who are younger than herself, have horrible attitudes towards work and no work ethics. She believes that the young people she worked with who were good workers are the exceptions and only works with people who are older. She also mentions that millennials have it more difficult than previous generations because the prices of property have increased too much.

Participant L said that he thinks millennials are valuing their personal time more because the concept of having a work-life balance came about through their generation. He said that they are no longer bowing down to bosses like the previous generations, they are more assertive.

Participant M said that he used to allow flexible measures even before flexibility was normalised at work but that he was often faced with limitations on how flexible he can be. He said that other people would question his flexibility because the mentality was still very

rigid at the time, especially before flexible measures were introduced in the public sector. He said that having the availability of the measures and also using them was a learning experience for his generation as they went from being very structed and rigid to allowing certain flexibility. He also said that he sees a difference between the generations because nowadays young people feel that they are entitled to flexibility while his generation had to fight for these measures. However, he maintained that the true difference lies in one's background and position rather than solely on generations. He said that he all for flexibility in the workplace in Malta, but that he fears we will soon lose control of employees.

Participant N said that she saw a big difference when her manager changed. She said that before she had an older manager who was quite rigid and that now she has a manager who is younger than she is. She said that the younger manager values that the work is being done, rather than when or where. She said that she sees millennials as being more assertive when compared to previous generations. She said that millennials, and also Gen Z, are more demanding of certain things such a sick leave and vacation leave while the older generations may perhaps be more accommodating to the employee. She also said that Gen Z are in a more comfortable position that millennials because millennials are still working in the shadow of their parents, and their mentality, while the Gen Zs will enter a workplace with a completely different culture already set. She said that millennials were the ones who created the biggest change in the workplace and are still processing the difference, while Gen Z will enter with the culture already changed. She said that Gen Z are not yet discouraged with work because they have yet to experience the real responsibilities of life, such as having a loan.

Participant O said that generations are not the main reason why there are different attitudes at the workplace but instead links it with one's position. She said that the mentality changes once someone is in a managerial position. She said that one's background is also a big factor in how they perceive work. She said that the mentality of being scared to ask for things like sick leave should stop, and that we should simply be taking them instead of requesting them. She believes that the pandemic has made her generation value life much more and that they have now become more assertive on

what they need for their wellbeing. She said that millennials, at this point, are already stuck with a loan or career and are less able to move if unhappy because they need a steady

income. She said the difference between her generation and the millennials is that her generation have not yet reached the stage in life where they need to settle and think about a loan and thus are not already discouraged by work.

Participant P said that if she works late on one day, she would not be able to work less the next day. She said that her manager, who is slightly older than her, expects her to be there. She mentioned that the mentality of younger people is very much entitled nowadays. She said that in the past, people had very little flexibility and quite bad conditions at work. She used the example of part-timers who would not be allowed sick leave if they worked less than twenty hours so the employer would give them nineteen-hour contracts. She said young people today have no idea of the struggles in the past.

Participant Q mentioned how the mentality has changed. He used the example of his father, who is fifty today, who used to work in a very demanding job and never thought of leaving. He said after years of being overworked, his father had had enough, and he left and found another job where he is much happier. He also said that he believes that some companies in Malta are not yet ready to allow certain flexibility to their employees, such as the case of taking sick leave.

Participant R said that the mentality is to idealise work and that this should not be the case. He said that we seem to be scared of our rights and are weary of asking for certain things, such as sick leave. He believes that Gen Z are more assertive than millennials and that they demand that they are given their rights. He said that there isn't a lot of difference between the two generations though. He said that the biggest difference can be seen between the young generation and the older ones, especially that of his father. He said his father's mentality is that a job is for life while for him that is completely against what he believes in. He said that he wants to move around and that his father was much more dedicated to his job than he ever will be. He also said that in Malta, we are very far from a WLB culture and mentality.

Trust, respect, and loyalty

Participant A said that having the flexibility on when and where he does his job and feeling that he is trusted to manage this flexibility is a major reason for him to stay with his company. In his company, employees are trusted to complete their tasks and are not

monitored or micromanaged. If there is a problem in productivity, managers would inspect the performance of that employee. In general, the company values deliverables more than being present at the office, eight hours a day.

Participant B said that her manager does not trust the employees and thus does not provide flexibility. During the pandemic, they were asked to work from home but once the restrictions were lifted, the manager did not want to allow remote working anymore, even though they were being sent directives from the ministry encouraging them to take up remote working.

Participant C mentions that it is wrong for managers not to trust their employees with flexible work arrangements.

Participant D says that the flexibility offered at his workplace respects the contribution he gives to the institute. He said that the biggest advantage of his job is that he feels respected and trusted and because of this he is empowered to contribute more. He says that he trusted to deliver and only check-in if issues arise.

Participant E says that she feels that her employers trust her enough to not need to keep tabs on her. She said that at first, they were very anxious which made her anxious. But when they relaxed a bit and start trusting her more, she became more eager to work well and deliver better, so they do not lose the trust in her.

Participant F feels that in his flexible job, he does not think that the managers change their perception of him should he do less than the hours he is schedule to do. He also mentions that he likes the trust they have of him to do certain jobs. He was asked to paint a door, for example, even through he does not have experience in this. He feels that he is learning new skills by being in this workplace.

Participant G, as a manager, wants to be able to trust her team to work and deliver the targets irrelevant of when or where they are achieved, so long as the quality is high. She prefers delegating and reviewing performance weekly and tackling any issues directly with the employee.

Participant I mentions that although she has seen the change in generations and their attitudes, she believes that if a person shows respect and loyalty at the workplace, they should be given the trust needed to have more flexibility in the way they do their job.

Participant J expressed her frustration when mentioning the shutdown week they are forced to take at her workplace. She said that she expects the employer to respect her freedom to choose the leave she wants to take, especially since she gives the company so much of her time and loyalty.

Participant M said that at his current workplace, he feels that he is respected and trusted enough to be able to have control over his work. He said he does not need to request certain measures as the ministry and colleagues know that he is a reliable worker. He said that he believes trust is earned and that it also sometimes comes with seniority. He also mentioned that sick leave was granted without needing to show a doctor's note and linked this to his seniority. He also mentioned however that if he is on sick leave but is still able to work, he would do so.

Participant N mentioned that she values trust a lot and that this has made her loyal to her company. She said that she was offered a job with a better salary but when she asked about flexible measures, they said that it is not part of the official policy of the company. She said that because her current workplace trusts her enough to give her flexibility, she would rather stay there than go to a place where they might not be offered so easily. She said that if a workplace allows employees to be flexible with their work, they are more likely to stay with that company.

Participant O said that she works in a trusted environment where the senior management, who is a millennial, encourages his team to take vacation and sick leave. In her previous employment, she said that everyone was very young and there was not an environment of respect. She said that she would be asked whether she was healthy enough to work when she took a sick day which she thought was very disrespectful considering how much time she dedicates to her job. She mentioned that at the time she did not like asking for overtime because she felt that her manager did not trust that she needed the overtime. She said that this is not the case in her current role, where her senior manager trusts that she is using

flexibility as needed. She said that in bother previous and current role, the job was stressful but since her current job allows for flexibility, she is much happier.

Resources

Participant C said that they do not have enough people at her workplace to be able to offer certain measures of work flexibility for everyone. Since their job is client facing and sometimes clients are met in the evening, there are only so many employees that can apply to work till 5pm.

Participant D mentions that time is a limited and personal resource, so employees are more likely to want control over it.

Participant F mentions that Malta does not have enough resources to reach the growth it keeps aiming for and this is putting a lot of pressure on the worker.

Participant I said that he needs to plan the work schedule according to the resources that he has available. He first needs to look at who is available, what skills they have, and when they are able to work to be able to create a work schedule. Since it is expensive to keep the resources on call for the full week, he needs to plan around what he has available. He mentioned that employees are taking their full vacation leave more than before and even if they need to take unpaid leave, they do so. He also mentions time as an important limited resource that we have and explains how he thinks having control over this would increase the wellbeing of employees.

Participant J acknowledges that sometimes she is too flexible and that her manager abuses of her flexibility and expects her to work longer hours and be on call during non-working hours. She feels like she is taken for granted at times.

Participant K said that you need to plan your work with the resources you have and flexibility is imperative for certain industries, like tourism, to function. She said that at the NGO she works for, there aren't enough volunteers. Furthermore, they do not have enough resources to have more than one paid employee so since she is the only one getting paid, she feels the responsibility to do most of the work.

Participant L said that when flexibility interferes with personal commitments and resources like time, such as the case of overtime, it is more likely that people will start looking for

alternative jobs. He thinks that the most important resource that a person has is time and having the ability to control that or having more of it should result in better work attitudes.

Participant M said that he would work longer hours and over the weekends not because there was a lack of resources but because he felt a sense of responsibility towards his clients, the children, to be available. However, he also mentioned that sometimes he would be so flexible with his colleagues that he would end up without resources to work with.

Participant O mentioned that there is a lack of resources at the NGO she works in that makes it difficult for her to be able to leave work. She also mentioned that a lot of the resources available are not qualified enough to handle certain cases so she ends up with a larger workload since she would be one of the few people who are able to do the work.

Participant P said that part of the reason she is overworked is because there aren't enough people to do the job.

Expense of living and the future

Participant B said that part of her dissatisfaction with her job is her salary but also the lack of opportunities in career growth and development that are available in her current workplace.

Participant E mentions that millennials are probably discouraged at work because they are aware of the high property prices and how expensive it has become to buy a house.

Participant G said that to be able to survive modern life, it is probably best to opt for a simple lifestyle and ignore the capitalist forces that encourage people to spend all their money on material things.

Participant I said that he thinks millennials have already given up on work because they look at the prices of property that are currently in the market and realise that they cannot afford to live a comfortable life. He said this will always be a grey cloud around their work life.

Participant K said that millennials are forced to work because there is no other option. She has a part-time job because she is unable to survive on her full-time job alone. She said the prices have increased drastically while the purchasing power decreased which has made millennials worriers. She said that since has been forced to take up a second job to be

financially stable, she has stopped enjoying her part-time job, which previously used to be something she liked doing.

Participant L said that how much life has changed and become expensive, people are no longer pursuing careers in certain industries. He said that the main factor of choosing a job is still the salary, not flexibility.

Participant N said that she only works because she cannot afford the cost of living. She said that she would rather be doing anything else with her time. She said this is a different situation when compared to previous generations who could afford to have one working parent in the household, for example. She said the fact that the government is already telling millennials that there will be no pension when they retire is a big demotivating factor for them.

Participant Q mentioned that WLB can only be achieved if wages became high enough to counter for the cost of living. He gave the example of one of his colleagues when he used to work in catering, who was an older individual who had to work two or three jobs with back-to-back shifts in order to support his family.

Participant R said that he does not go to work because he wants to but because he has to. He said that millennials cannot afford life. He said that most of the salaries are high enough to buy irrelevant items, such as a smartphone, but not high enough to buy property. He said that even things such as climate change affects the perception of work. He said that there is nothing to look forward to in the future.

Abuse of flexible work arrangements

Participant C believes that offering flexibility will not increase engagement or productivity at the workplace as there is too much abuse of these measures from the employees. She felt that her workplace was abusing of the fact that there was flexibility during the pandemic as her team was working longer hours when working remote and she felt that there was a higher expectation for them to be always available.

Participant D mentions that he sees other people at the institute abusing of the flexibility being offered. He said that he does not mind this since it does not affect his work or that of his colleagues'.

Participant G feels that some of the people in her team abuse of the flexibility being offered. She used an example of someone who asked her to punch him in and out of work for the day as he was at his daughter's football match doing a training course. She said that this sort of abuse started post-pandemic when employees became aware of the measures that they could request. She said that there is a way to control this behaviour, through micromanaging, but that this would go against her managerial principles. She feels that the abuse of these measures is leading to a decrease in productivity and quality. She said she has called parents working from home several times and noted how loud the children in the background were, for example.

Participant I said that considering that employers created work flexibility, employers will be the ones to abuse of the measures. He said the majority is always going to suffer and in this case the majority is the millennials.

Participant K believes that flexibility will always lead to abuse. She has never had a job that kept within the eight-hour bracket – she has always needed to be always available without the outlined boundaries that certain other jobs would have. She said that if she leaves her first workplace to go to the second one but something from the first job crops up, she would still be contacted and would be the one who will need to see how to resolve the issue. She said that if the employer is offering flexibility, you are expected to give it back. She admitted she was also in the managerial position abusing of the flexibility of her team at times. She said it depends on the employer but that most would abuse of the flexibility of their workers.

Participant M said that if he sees someone is abusing of the flexible measures, he would confront them first and see why they are doing so. He said that he does not simply stop offering the flexibility. He maintained that work-life balance goes both ways – you cannot have employees always favouring the life domain and forgetting about the work domain.

Participant O said that power makes you weary, and you start questioning whether people are abusing of flexibility. She said that she herself doing this – her attitudes towards her colleagues changed when she went to a managerial position. She also mentioned that she would personally prefer not having overtime rates when she applies for overtime as she does not want to seem like she has an ulterior motive to applying for it. She said that she

would rather not have to go through requesting it and wants to simply work overtime and get paid with her standard rate.

Participant P said that a lot of people abuse of sick leave. She also said that if she is on sick leave but is able to work, she would work.

Participant R said that in certain cases, the flexibility of a job means that the employees are abused by employers. He gives the example of food delivery drives who have very poor work conditions and who have numerous flexible jobs to be able to survive.

Alienation and a sense of community at the workplace

Participant C said that during the pandemic, she preferred working from home as they had the 'bubble' system which meant that people were clustered in small groups and went to the office on specific days to try and minimise the spread of the virus. When the bubble system stopped, she preferred going to the office more as she enjoyed the atmosphere and her colleagues. She still works some days from home but mostly works from the office.

Participant G said that it is becoming increasingly difficult to motivate employees to work as a team again, post-pandemic. She sees people keeping to themselves, doing their work in their bubble with headphones on and interacting virtually with colleagues. She said she sees this with Generation Z in particular. The company she works for gets young summer workers and these are not engaging with the rest of the team and prefer to do work on their own. She mentions that their sense of entitlement is also causing frustration within the teams.

Participant J mentioned that although it is good that learning has become more flexible, e-learning is creating a situation where young people have become alienated in their own world and are not equipped to interact with others in the workplace.

Participant L said that he thinks the flexibility being exercised by employees is causing them to become alienated from their work responsibilities. They are becoming more disengaged and dissociated from their jobs.

Participant M said that during the pandemic, he missed the sense of community that he had at the workplace and that he believes that being separated from your co-workers may result in less job satisfaction. He also said that this sense of community and the network that his jobs permitted him to create is one of the reasons why he enjoys what he does so much.

Participant O said that once the pandemic was a bit more under control and there was less stress at her workplace, she was happy to go back to the office and rebuild her relationships with her colleagues. She said that she now enjoys going to work and that she will miss her colleagues once she leaves to travel.

Participant Q mentioned that when he used to work as a waiter, he regarded his job as a form of social activity. He said that he used to go to work and feel a sense of community with the other employees that would allow him to switch off from his life domain – which, at the time, was mostly concerned with university. He said that he used to enjoy going there because there was a nice culture, and he would be able to be distracted from the rest of his responsibilities during a non-labour intensive shift.

Participant R said that he felt lonely when the pandemic hit. He first thought that working remotely would be good for his WLB but that he then felt stressed from working from home and that this was affecting his wellbeing because he was not socialising.

Changes in Opportunities

Participant B said that she felt millennials were caught in the middle of a spark in opportunities in technology but when that became a reality in Malta, it was already too late for her as she had already chosen the subjects she was studying.

Participant C mentions that she believes that certain opportunities for work in specific industries, and also the push to study these fields, are still limited for women.

Participant D mentions that millennials had a lot of new opportunities to choose from which gave them a sense of anxiety to choose the right area of study and field of work. He believes that this affects how satisfied they are at the workplace.

Participant E mentions that she feels like she missed out on certain opportunities when she needed to choose which subjects to study as there was not enough push for subjects such as technology. She says that this may also be linked to gender.

Participant J said that perhaps millennials have less positive attributes at work because they grew up more supported than the previous generations, and with more opportunities. She said that perhaps millennials started taking things for granted as they know that they have more opportunities available if they are unhappy in a job, they can change.

Participant M said that part of the reason why he thinks millennials have different attitudes than the rest was because millennials are more aware that if they do not like certain conditions at work, particularly with the amount of work, they know that they can move for something better. Before, they did not have so many opportunities. He believes that people know are less committed to their job because there are many alternatives available, and a job is no longer there for life.

Participant O said that she believed the younger generations had more privilege than the older ones because they were probably given more support by their parents. She said that people who are not as privileged can never reach a WLB because there aren't enough opportunities available for them to be able to move jobs if they are unhappy. She said that this is especially the case for those who do not have an education or family to fall back on and that it is the job of the government to give these people more attention.

Media and knowledge

Participant B said that seeing other companies across the globe and nationally, especially when the jobs are similar to hers, exercise work flexibility while she is not able to do so because of her manager is very demotivating. She said that this accentuates other things she dislikes about her job.

Participant D says that perhaps the fact that millennials grew up in a world which exhibited many opportunities that they can take, including travel, affects how they perceive work.

Participant F mentions how when people compare the conditions of work in Malta with abroad, they realise that the conditions here are not very good for the workers and that affects how they perceive work. He said that the work-life balance in Malta is very poor, even after the new EU directive.

Participant I said that the way the nursing career was being advertised in Malta was building a false picture in young people's minds and when they get into the industry and realise the hard work it entails, they become demotivated and unhappy.

Participant H said that the way the media is portraying certain jobs is affecting the level of engagement and satisfaction of employees as they go in thinking that they will have a comfortable and easy job but then reality kicks in and demands become higher and higher.

Participant L said that part of the reason why we are prioritising our non-work time more is because we are aware of the possibility that work can be done remotely while one travels the world.

Participant M said that if employees are aware that certain flexibility measures are easily available by others and are even being taken for granted while they personally are not being offered these measures, the employees will start to experience their work negatively.

Workplace environment

Participant A explained that since a lot of the employees work remotely, desks at the office are only assigned to a specific employee if that person is present at the office least three times a week.

Participant B said that she can connect more with her colleagues online. She does not like the office and does not want to go to the office so the atmosphere for her there is negative. However, she also mentioned that some of her colleagues who can work from home due to family friendly measures prefer to work from the office as they do not have the proper equipment at home to do their work and would also have too many distractions caused by their children at home.

Participant D believes that if a workplace is dangerous, noisy, or has long commutes it would affect worker's attitudes negatively.

Participant E mentions that she works better when she works from home as there is too much noise at the office. She also said that she engages better with her colleagues online.

Participant G said that she believes the work environment is important to how employees perceive work. She said that if she had to work in an office with poor light or ventilation, for example, she would not be happy with her job.

Participant O said that during the pandemic, the workplace was too stressful and that she would try to find any reason to work from home and avoid the office. She said that this affected her job satisfaction at the time.

Family friendly measure bias

Participant B mentioned that her manager does not allow remote working at the workplace. However, people with children can take up remote work should they want to.

Participant C says that most of the work flexibility that is offered at her workplace is given to those with a family as there is a limit of the number of people who they can offer flexibility to.

Participant G mentioned that her employer has the tendency to request longer hours from her, rather than her colleagues who are parents, as her non-work time does not seem as important as that of employees with family responsibilities for her manager.

Participant M said that although he has always tried to be flexible with his colleagues and has sought to help employees who need certain measures, he only mentions helping employees who are in need of flexibility due to family commitments.

Participant O said that the formal FWA measures are for those with dependents. However, she is still able to use flexibility informally.

Non-work activities

Participant M said that their workplace is trying to organise more social activities outside the working hours as a form of team building. He said that for him these events are not very important for him personally. He said that he can see how younger people are more engaged when there are non-work conversations though.

Participant N said that she thinks activities organised by the workplace after working hours are a waste of time and that she never attends such activities. She also mentioned that for her, having check-ins with HR is also a waste of time as she is simply there to do her job and leave. She does not want to waste time with non-work activities.

Appendix I

Full online questionnaire

This questionnaire will look into how certain measures employed by organisations that alter the way people work may have an effect on the employee experience or attitudes at the workplace.

The full questionnaire will take around 6-10 minutes to complete. All responses are anonymous, unless otherwise preferred by yourself. Data analysis and reporting will remain confidential.

All questions marked with an asterisk (*) are required.

START

Employment Questionnaire
2. Personal Information

1 | Please indicate your sex. *

○ Male

○ Female

○ Other/Prefer not to say

2 | Please indicate your age group. *

○ born between 1946 and 1964

○ born between 1965 and 1980

○ born between 1981 and 1996

○ born in 1997 and later

3 | Please indicate your nationality. *

○ Maltese

○ Other (includes having a Maltese dual citezenship)

4 | If not Maltese, please indicate how long have you lived in Malta.

Only answer this question if you chose **Other** in Q3.

○ 0 - 5 years

○ 5 - 10 years

○ 10 - 15 years

○ 15 years or more

○ All my life

5 | Please indicate your marital status. *

○ Married

○ In a relationship and living with partner

○ In a relationship

○ Single

○ Other/Prefer not to say

6 | Do you have dependants (for example, children, elderly parents, etc)? *

○ Yes ○ No

Yes   No

7 | Are you the sole breadwinner of your household? *

This question is asking you if you are the only person in your house that works.

◯ Yes   ◯ No

8 | Please indicate your level of education. *

◯ Secondary Education

◯ Post-Secondary Education

◯ Vocational Education

◯ Diploma/MQF Level 5

◯ Degree/MQF Level 6

◯ Masters/MQF Level 7

◯ Doctorate/MQF Level 8

9 | Please indicate your main employment status. *

○ Full-time

○ Part-time

○ Self-employed

○ Employed but currently on a period of unpaid/paid leave

○ Unemployed

○ Other

10 | Please indicate the sector you work in. *

○ Private

○ Public

11 | Do you have managerial responsibility in your current role? *

<<   >>

○   ○

17%
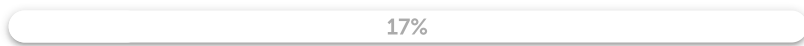
Employment Questionnaire
3. Your attitude towards work.

12 | Please indicate how you feel about these questions. *

How do you feel about your job?

- ○ Delighted
- ○ Pleased
- ○ Mostly satisfied
- ○ Mixed
- ○ Mostly dissatisfied
- ○ Unhappy
- ○ Terrible

How do you feel about the people you work with?

- ○ Delighted
- ○ Pleased
- ○ Mostly satisfied
- ○ Mixed

○ Mostly dissatisfied

○ Unhappy

○ Terrible

How do you feel about the work you do on your job?

○ Delighted

○ Pleased

○ Mostly satisfied

○ Mixed

○ Mostly dissatisfied

○ Unhappy

○ Terrible

How do you feel about where you work? (the physical surroundings, the hours, the amount of work you are asked to do)

○ Delighted

○ Pleased

○ Mostly satisfied

○ Mixed

○ Mostly dissatisfied

○ Unhappy

○ Terrible

How do you feel about what you have available for doing your job? (equipment, information, good supervision, etc)

○ Delighted

○ Pleased

○ Mostly satisfied

○ Mixed

○ Mostly dissatisfied

○ Unhappy

○ Terrible

13 | Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. *

At my work, I feel bursting with energy

○ Always

○ Very often

○ Often

○ Sometimes

○ Rarely

○ Almost never

○ Never

Employment Questionnaire
4. Flexible Work Arrangements (Final Section)

The study is looking at Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) as measures that organisations may implement that change the way their employees perform their jobs. FWAs may come in various forms, as you will see.

Note that FWAs are simply measures that change the traditional work week. Therefore, any measure that is changing the standard 9 to 5, Monday to Friday at the office work-week is a flexible work arrangement.

16 | Please indicate the availability and use of the individual Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) listed. The right side of the   *
   | matrix provides a general description of each one.

Category 1: Flexibility in the timing of work

Flexitime

○ Not offered but I do not need it

○ Not offered but I could use it

○ Offered but I do not/have not used it

○ Offered and I use it/have used it.

○ I am unsure if offered

Have some or full control over the time of your workday

Core Days

○ Not offered but I do not need it

○ Not offered but I could use it

○ Offered but I do not/have not used it

○ Offered and I use it/have used it.

○ I am unsure if offered

Can choose which days to work on but certain days are compulsary

---

Results-Based Professional Work

○ Not offered but I do not need it

○ Not offered but I could use it

○ Offered but I do not/have not used it

○ Offered and I use it/have used it.

○ I am unsure if offered

Can stop working once tasks for that day/week are completed

Contingent Work

○ Not offered but I do not need it

○ Not offered but I could use it

○ Offered but I do not/have not used it

○ Offered and I use it/have used it.

○ I am unsure if offered

Non-permanent employment for specific skills with variable hours and on-demand basis (example freelancing)

Shift Work/Rotating Shifts/Weekend, Evening, Night Work

○ Not offered but I do not need it

○ Not offered but I could use it

○ Offered but I do not/have not used it

○ Offered and I use it/have used it.

○ I am unsure if offered

Scheduled shifts which may or may not have specific days/times.

Four Day Work Week/Compressed Work Week

○ Not offered but I do not need it

○ Not offered but I could use it

○ Offered but I do not/have not used it

○ Offered and I use it/have used it.

○ I am unsure if offered

Shorter work week, may include longer work days if still on a 40-hour contract

---

17 | Please indicate the availability and use of the individual Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) listed. The right side of the matrix provides a general description of each one.   *

matrix provides a general description of each one.

Category 2: Flexibility in the location or place of work

Telework/Flex place or satellite offices

○ Not offered but I do not need it

○ Not offered but I could use it

○ Offered but I do not/have not used it

○ Offered and I use it/have used it.

○ I am unsure if offered

Working outside of the office, usually at home but may also include different workspaces which may or may not be provided by the company

Travel or Client Office work/Split Locations

○ Not offered but I do not need it

○ Not offered but I could use it

○ Offered but I do not/have not used it

○ Offered and I use it/have used it.

○ I am unsure if offered

Regularly travelling for work or working at clients' offices or having multiple offices where you can work at

Informal telework and non-standard working time

○ Not offered but I do not need it

○ Not offered but I could use it

○ Offered but I do not/have not used it

○ Offered and I use it/have used it.

○ I am unsure if offered

Flexibility measures are used on an as-needed basis and not as standard practices

---

18 │ Please indicate the availability and use of the individual Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) listed. The right side of the matrix provides a general description of each one.   *

Category 3: Flexibility in the amount of work

Job Sharing

○ Not offered but I do not need it

○ Not offered but I could use it

○ Offered but I do not/have not used it

○ Offered and I use it/have used it.

○ I am unsure if offered

Sharing a 40-hour contract with another person

Employment Questionnaire
5. Thank you!

20 | Should you wish to take part in the competition and be in the chance to win a €15 One4All gift voucher, please provide your email address below.

The winner will be chosen through an online winner generator.

Enter answer

21 | Should you wish to get access to the results once published, please provide your email address below.

Enter answer

22 | Please confirm that you give your consent to participating in this research. *

By giving your consent, you are agreeing with the below:

I agree to participate in the data collection through the online questionnaire carried out by Eugenia Sammut of the University of Malta, to aid with the research on Flexible Work Arrangements;

I am aware that I will remain anonymous throughout the data reported;

I am participating in the questionnaire on voluntary basis;

I understand that the data collected follow the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Malta Data Protection Act 2018 and can access, rectify, and where applicable erase the data concerning myself.

○ I give my consent

<<   >>

67%

Appendix J

URECA Approval

Research Ethics and Data Protection Form

L-Università ta' Malta

University of Malta staff, students, or anyone else planning to carry out research under the auspices of the University, must complete this form. The UM may also consider requests for ethics and data protection review by External Applicants.

Ahead of completing this online form, please read carefully the University of Malta Research Code of Practice and the University of Malta Research Ethics Review Procedures. Any breach of the Research Code of Practice or untruthful replies in this form will be considered a serious disciplinary matter. It is advisable to download a full digital version of the form to familiarise yourself with its contents (https://www.um.edu.mt/research/ethics/resources/umdocuments/). You are also advised to refer to the FAQs (https://www.um.edu.mt/research/ethics/faqs).

Part 1: Applicant and Project Details
Applicant Details

Name: Eugenia

Surname: Sammut

Email: eugenia.v.sammut.11@um.edu.mt

Applicant Status: Student

Please indicate if you form part of a Faculty, Institute, School or Centre: *   Faculty of Economics, Management & Accountancy

Department: *   Management

Principal Supervisor's Name: *   Vincent Cassar

Principal Supervisor's Email: *   vincent.cassar@um.edu.mt

Co-Supervisor's Name:

Course and Study Unit Code: *   Master of Arts in Management & EMA5900

Student Number: *   490893M

Project Details

Title of Research Project: *
A study on the relationship between flexible work arrangements and work attitudinal outcomes among millennials in the Maltese labour market.

Project description, including research question/statement and method, in brief: *
This research will look at the relationship between people's perceptions of Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) and four attitudinal outcomes, namely work engagement, job satisfaction, employee well-being and intention to remain. Focusing on millennials, who make up a large proportion of the Maltese labour market, the aim of the study is to establish and understand the relationship between flexible work arrangements and specific attitudinal outcomes. This should provide a better understanding of FWAs that top management and policy makers alike may then refer to as the Maltese labour market adapts to more contemporary needs.

Will project involve collection of primary data from human participants?   Yes / Unsure

Explain primary data collection from human participants:

a. Salient participant characteristics (min-max participants, age, sex, other): *
The collection of data will take place in two forms:

1. Online questionnaire. Around 350-400 responses will need to be received. The responses must include employed persons (not self-employed) from both males and females, from both the public and private sector, with ages ranging between 18 and 75. Responses will be anonymous unless the respondants prefer otherwise.

2. Focus Group - 2 or 3 focus groups. Each group will have 5-6 participants and they must represent both males and females, both public and private sector workers, and the different age groups (4).

b. How will they be recruited: *
1. Questionnaire responses will be gathered through an online survey software.

2. Focus group participants will be chosen based on their employment details, age, and sex. People from the researcher's own community will be chosen for these groups.

c. What they will be required to do and for how long: *
1. The questionnaire is closed ended and should take around 6-10 minutes to complete. It will be completed online.

2. The focus groups will take place online (or face to face, depending on the COVID-19 situation) and should take around 45-60mins each.

d. If inducements/rewards/compensation are offered: *
An incentive to complete the online questionnaire will be added whereby respondants may win a prize if they complete the questionnaire and insert their email address. An online random winner generator will be used to choose the winner. The prize will not be advertised unless needed (in cases where the minimum amount of responses is not reached by the target date).

e. How participants/society may benefit: *
At the end of the questionnaire, there is the option of receiving access to the results once published. The aim of the study is to provide further information on the implementation of flexible work arrangements, which are important parts of today's labour industry.

f. If participants are identifiable at any stage of the research: *

Though the researcher will know who the respondants are if they choose to participate in the raffle and if they choose to receive the publication and also who the focus group participants are (and they will know each other), identifiable information on the individuals will not be featured in any part of the write up and publication of the research.

g. The manner in which you will manage and store the data: *

1. Data received from the online questionnaire will be accessible from the survey software and exported on excel.

2. The focus groups will be recorded and trasncribed onto a word document using codes for the different participants.

All data will be stored on a personal drive. They will not be shared and all information will be kept confidential. Once the research is complete, the recordings and transicpts will be deleted.

Part 2: Self Assessment and Relevant Details

Human Participants

1. Risk of harm to participants: No / N.A.

2. Physical intervention: No / N.A.

3. Vulnerable participants: No / N.A.

4. Identifiable participants: No / N.A.

5. Special Categories of Personal Data (SCPD):   No / N.A.

6. Human tissue/samples: No / N.A.

7. Withheld info assent/consent: No / N.A.

8. 'opt-out' recruitment: No / N.A.

9. Deception in data generation: No / N.A.

10. Incidental findings: No / N.A.

Unpublished secondary data

11. Human: No / N.A.

12. Animal: No / N.A.

13. No written permission: No / N.A.

Animals

14. Live animals, lasting harm: No / N.A.

15. Live animals, harm: No / N.A.

16. Source of dead animals, illegal: No / N.A.

General Considerations

17. Cooperating institution: Yes / Unsure

I will be asking permission from UoM to share the questionnaire around the UoM community, this needs the present FREC form.

I will be asking permission from IfE to share the questionnaire around the IfE community, this will require me to submit their ethics form.

18. Risk to researcher/s: No / N.A.

19. Risk to environment: No / N.A.

20. Commercial sensitivity: No / N.A.

Other Potential Risks

21. Other potential risks: No / N.A.

22. Official statement: Do you require an official statement from the F/REC that this submission has abided by the UM's REDP procedures?
No / N.A.

Part 3: Submission

Which F/REC are you submitting to? *   Faculty of Economics, Management & Accountancy

Attachments:
- ☐ Information and/or recruitment letter*
- ☑ Consent forms (adult participants)*
- ☐ Consent forms for legally responsible parents/guardians, in case of minors and/or adults unable to give consent*
- ☐ Assent forms in case of minors and/or adults unable to give consent*
- ☑ Data collection tools (interview questions, questionnaire etc.)
- ☐ Data Management Plan
- ☐ Data controller permission in case of use of unpublished secondary data
- ☐ Licence/permission to use research tools (e.g. constructs/tests)
- ☐ Any permits required for import or export of materials or data
- ☐ Letter granting institutional approval for access to participants
- ☐ Institutional approval for access to data
- ☐ Letter granting institutional approval from person directly responsible for participants
- ☐ Other

Please feel free to add a cover note or any remarks to F/REC

The documents uploaded are drafts and actual questionnaire/focus group questions may vary from the ones implemented. The general idea of both types of data collection has however been captured in these drafts.

Declarations: *

- ☑ I hereby confirm having read the University of Malta Research Code of Practice and the University of Malta Research Ethics Review Procedures.

- ☑ I hereby confirm that the answers to the questions above reflect the contents of the research proposal and that the information provided above is truthful.

- ☑ I hereby give consent to the University Research Ethics Committee to process my personal data for the purpose of evaluating my request, audit and other matters related to this application. I understand that I have a right of access to my personal data and to obtain the rectification, erasure or restriction of processing in accordance with data protection law and in particular the General Data Protection Regulation (EU 2016/679, repealing Directive 95/46/EC) and national legislation that implements and further specifies the relevant provisions of said Regulation.

Applicant Signature: *   Eugenia Sammut

Date of Submission: *   10/01/2022

If applicable: Date collection start date   17/01/2022

Administration

REDP Application ID   FEMA-2022-00021

Current Status   Approved