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**The impact of flexible work arrangements, as a  
management strategy, on employees' perceived  
productivity and mental wellbeing**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree

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## Abstract

Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) have become increasingly prevalent over the past few decades. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this trend, and many organisations now feel the need to continue providing flexible work options to meet the expectations of their employees. However, there seems to be a lack of understanding of how FWAs, as a management strategy, could moderate relationships with an organisation. Prior research suggests FWAs positively and negatively impact employees' productivity and mental wellbeing within an organisation. Therefore, it has become necessary for organisations to understand the impact of FWAs as a management strategy to use them effectively for decision-making. The Management Control Theory (MCT) and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model provide the theoretical frameworks for the present study to examine the impact of FWAs, as a management strategy, on the relationships between employee experiences and perceived productivity and employee experiences and mental wellbeing.

Using a quantitative research design, the present study examined the impact of FWAs, as a management strategy, moderating the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing. Data were collected from an online survey of New Zealand employees working in an organisation with FWAs. 176 valid responses were examined through correlational and moderation regression analysis.

Key findings show a statistically significant relationship between employees' experience and perceived productivity. Employee experiences, when expressed as opportunities, positively impacted perceived productivity, while when expressed as challenges, negatively impact perceived productivity. When FWAs, as a management strategy, were added as a moderator, the relationships were impacted: employee experiences, expressed as opportunities, had a more positive impact on perceived productivity; and employee experiences, expressed as challenges, had a less negative impact on perceived productivity. There was not a statistically significant relationship between employees' experience, expressed as opportunities or expressed as challenges, and mental wellbeing. However, when FWAs, as a management strategy, were added as a moderator, the relationships were statistically significant: employee experiences, expressed as opportunities, had a positive impact on mental wellbeing; and employee experiences, expressed as challenges, had a less negative impact on perceived productivity.

This study suggests that if organisations cannot provide sufficient resources to support employees, especially during challenging times, organisations could consider using FWAs as

a management strategy to help moderate the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity, and employee experiences and mental wellbeing.

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## List of Abbreviations and Glossary

The following list explains the meaning of abbreviations and other terms which are used throughout the thesis.

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
FWA(s)	Flexible Work Arrangements
AWA(s)	Alternative Work Arrangements
MCT	Management Control Theory
JD-R model	Job Demands-Resources Model
IT	Information Technology
EEOPP	Employee experiences opportunities
EECHALL	Employee experiences challenges
PP	Perceived productivity
MW	Mental wellbeing
MS	Management strategies
WD	Work demand
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
EFA	Exploratory factor analysis
CFA	Confirmatory factor analysis
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait
AVE	Average Variance Extracted

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Social trends, advances in information technology, cultural shifts, and employee desires for more flexibility in the workplace have resulted in a global increase in employees engaged flexible work arrangements (FWAs) (Hunter, 2019). FWAs are characterised as benefits provided by employers, which enable employees to have some degree of autonomy over their work schedule and location, beyond the traditional workday (Lambert et al., 2008). As FWAs are becoming more and more common in organisations, (Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2020), research suggests FWAs have a positive correlation with employee engagement and employee productivity (Bal & De Lange, 2015; Hakanen et al., 2018). Additionally, FWAs have been identified as a means to assist in maintaining work-life balance, employee wellbeing and productivity (Caesens et al., 2016). This suggests an opportunity to further explore FWAs on employee experiences, and the impact this has on employee productivity and mental wellbeing. Therefore, the research question of this study is: what is the impact of FWAs as a management strategy, moderating the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity, and employee experiences and mental wellbeing.

In order to answer the research question of this study, the thesis is structured as follows. The purpose of chapter one is to introduce the research study, highlight the theoretical framework for the research, provide background on the problem, detail the problem statement, identify the purpose of the research, significance, and nature of the study, present limitations and delimitations, present the research questions and hypotheses, and define key research terms. The purpose of chapter two is to present an in-depth review of the literature, provide context for the study, confirm the research gap in the research to be studied and introduce theoretical frames within the research which the research will be situated. Chapter three presents details on the research methodology, research design, the research approach, data collection, validity and reliability, and data analysis strategies. Chapter four outlines the research findings by providing details on the data collection procedure, data analysis process, statistical analysis procedure and results. Chapter five concludes the research study by discussing the research findings, implications and recommendations.

Key findings show a statistically significant relationship between employees' experience and perceived productivity. Employee experiences, when expressed as opportunities, positively impacted perceived productivity, while when expressed as challenges, negatively impact perceived productivity. When FWAs, as a management strategy, were added as a moderator the relationships were impacted: employee experiences, expressed as opportunities, had a more positive impact on perceived productivity; and employee experiences, expressed as

challenges, had a less negative impact on perceived productivity. There was not a statistically significant relationship between employees' experience, expressed as opportunities or expressed as challenges, and mental wellbeing. However, when FWAs, as a management strategy, were added as a moderator, the relationships were statistically significant: employee experiences, expressed as opportunities, had a positive impact on mental wellbeing; and employee experiences, expressed as challenges, had a less negative impact on perceived productivity.

This study suggests if organisations cannot provide sufficient resources to support employees, especially during challenging times, organisations could consider using FWAs as a management strategy to help moderate the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity, and employee experiences and mental wellbeing.

### Background of Study

Over the past few decades, FWAs have become more common. The COVID-19 pandemic has further increased the demand for FWAs, and organisations are recognising the importance of providing them to meet employee expectations (Hunter, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic presented a global crisis that had a significant impact on the global economy, organisations and people (Spurk & Straub, 2020). The pandemic challenged organisations in various sectors of activity, with many organisations being forced to adopt new working arrangements to accommodate the changes (Almeida et al., 2020). The pace with which the changes occurred was tremendous; organisations had to pivot and accommodate for changes during the pandemic regardless of their previous positioning and experience in FWAs.

In early 2020 when many organisations were required to shift to flexible work, many employers were left unable to adequately support employees' new working conditions (Shipman et al., 2021). The pandemic has given organisations the chance to explore the benefits and challenges of FWAs. It has also highlighted the key issues that need to be resolved in order to maximize the benefits of FWAs and promote the strategic use of digital technologies (Roberto et al., 2023). FWAs allow employees to have greater control over their work schedules and how they complete their tasks and responsibilities. While adhering to organisational guidelines, employees have some flexibility in determining how they work, providing them with the opportunity to take care of their personal and family matters (Anderson et al., 2002).

Although many organisations are now providing FWAs to meet the expectations of employees who prefer to work with flexibility, this is often without the infrastructure and mechanisms in place to support employees dealing with these abrupt workplace shifts (Burrell, 2020). Notably, when managers and organisations engage in flexible working for the first time, they tend to be unaware of the dynamics that must be addressed in this new operations modality, for example, communications, expectations, responsibilities, policies, implementation strategies, work-life balance, and employee mental wellbeing (Day & Burbach, 2015).

Along with the changes in the working practices, the organisational structures, employee character, and tools utilised to conduct work are also being modified (Yu et al., 2019). With the development and implementation of FWAs, organisations are integrating different initiatives with the strategy of promoting workplace flexibility, increasing job satisfaction, and improving work-life balance (Caesens et al., 2016). Research has shown that for flexible work to be successful, there needs to be a change in the approach towards work models that prioritizes the wellbeing of employees and enables them to choose the conditions under which they complete their tasks (Stiglitz et al., 2009).

From an organisational standpoint, using FWAs, as a management strategy, can reduce absenteeism, positively impact productivity, improve organisational reputation, increase employee loyalty and commitment, attract and retain employees, and reduce turnover (Baker et al., 2007; Chimote & Srivastava, 2013; Golden et al., 2008). From the perspective of the employee, using FWAs, as a management strategy, has been shown to increase job satisfaction, increase productivity, reduce job stress, reduce work-life conflict, and develop a positive mental health (Baker et al., 2007; Chimote & Srivastava, 2013; Golden et al., 2008). Research also suggests FWAs are associated with various job satisfaction and productivity measures (Baker et al., 2007; Hakanen et al., 2018). The benefits from both an organisational and employee perspective make FWAs appealing.

This study examines the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing, and the impact on these relationships when FWAs, as a management strategy, is added as a moderator.

## Problem Statement

This research study focuses on how FWAs, as a management strategy, impact the relationship between employee experiences and productivity, and the mental wellbeing of employees in an organisation. The study specifically looks at the use of FWAs as a

management strategy and how it can be effectively utilized in a proactive manner. Currently, many organisations lack an understanding of how to use FWAs effectively (Caesens et al., 2016). While some scholars suggest FWAs have positive impacts on employee turnover, productivity, and mental wellbeing (Baker et al., 2007; Chimote & Srivastava, 2013; Golden et al., 2008), others suggest FWAs have a negative impact on employees' mental health and wellbeing (Felstead & Henseke, 2017; Knight et al., 2020). Organisations may find this problematic because the same strategies that improve organisational performance may also have a negative impact on employee mental health and wellbeing.

The research contributes to the field of management by enriching the literature to include an examination of FWAs as a management strategy in organisations, with a specific focus on employee perceived productivity and mental wellbeing in a New Zealand context. The study also aims to help organisations better understand FWAs as a management strategy and how this could impact the relationship between employee experiences, and productivity, and mental wellbeing.

### Purpose of the Study

This study aims to examine the relationship between FWAs, as a management strategy, moderating the relationship between employee experiences and their perceived productivity, and mental wellbeing. Employee productivity and mental wellbeing are of significant priority for both organisations and employees (Galanti et al., 2021). From an organisational perspective, FWAs implemented as an effective management strategy are suggested to positively impact employee productivity and enhance employee mental wellbeing (Baker et al., 2007). From an employee perspective, FWAs implemented as an effective management strategy are suggested to improve employee experience, positively impact productivity, reduce job stress and promote desirable mental health (Baker et al., 2007).

### Nature of the Study

A quantitative correlational study was developed and conducted to respond to the research question. This enabled an examination of statistical associations to explain relationships between variables (Curtis et al., 2016). Data were collected using an online survey administered through Qualtrics. Research participants were recruited via social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn) and shared via email utilising my network of friends, family and work colleagues. All participants were working in organisations with FWAs in New

Zealand in order for data to be collected on their experiences of working flexibly. The data were analysed to determine if relationships exist between the moderating variable of FWAs as a management strategy on employee experiences and perceived productivity, and mental wellbeing.

### Research Question and Hypotheses

The research question of this study is: what is the impact of FWAs as a management strategy, moderating the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing?

The study investigated the following hypotheses:

- H1: Employee experiences, expressed as opportunities, positively impact employee perceived productivity.
- H2: Employee experiences, expressed as challenges, negatively impact employee perceived productivity.
- H3: Employee experiences, expressed as opportunities, positively impacts employee mental wellbeing.
- H4: Employee experiences, expressed as challenges, negatively impacts employee mental wellbeing.
- H5: Management strategies have a more positive impact on the relationship between employee experiences, expressed as opportunities and employee perceived productivity.
- H6: Management strategies have a less negative impact on the relationship between employee experiences, expressed as challenges, and employee perceived productivity.
- H7: Management Strategies have a more positive impact on the relationship between employee experiences, expressed as opportunities, and employee mental wellbeing.
- H8: Management strategies have a less negative impact on the relationship between employee experiences, expressed as challenges, and employee mental wellbeing.

### Theoretical Framework

MCT and the JD-R model provide a theoretical framework for the present study to examine the impact of FWAs, as a management strategy, on employee experiences and perceived

productivity and mental wellbeing. MCT considers the dimensions of the relationship between management and the employee of an organisation. Management control is a tool used by managers to interact with each other and their employees (Herath, 2007). Understanding MCT helps understand the impact of FWAs, as a management strategy, on organisational goals. Understanding MCT can also provide insight into the aspects that influence the relationships between managers and employees.

The JD-R model was introduced in 2001 to understand burnout, a chronic type of psychological stress brought on by the workplace that is characterised by exhaustion (i.e., feeling emotionally drained), mental distance (i.e., cynicism and lack of enthusiasm), and decreased personal efficacy (i.e., doubting one's competence and contribution at work) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001). The JD-R model suggests that each job has both demands and resources. Job demands were defined as "aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs" (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 105). These are, essentially, the 'negative things' at work that drain energy, such as work overload, disagreements among employees, and potential job insecurity. Job resources, on the other hand, are the 'positive things', which are described as "aspects of the job that may do any of the following: (a) be functional in achieving work goals; (b) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; (c) stimulate personal growth and development" (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 105). The JD-R model offers a lens to understand the relationship between managers and employees, influenced by the job demands and job resources of an organisation.

### Limitations and Delimitation

Limitations in research are biases or potential flaws that may limit the practical use of research findings or impact study findings through participant responses (Wright et al., 2014). Potential flaws in a study cannot be controlled by a researcher (Kirkwood & Price, 2013). Because of the number of people who took part in the study, the validity of the results was dependent on each question in the questionnaire being answered. Although this sample may provide insight into the impact of FWAs on the relationship between employee experiences and employee perceived productivity, and mental wellbeing in New Zealand, it may not be large enough to ensure that the study's findings are applicable to populations in other countries.

The boundaries that the researcher establishes for the study are called delimitations (Queirós et al., 2017). Delimitations are the elements of the study that establish the boundary or restrict

the scope. Delimitations should be used in order to specify the study's scope (Queirós et al., 2017).

For the purposes of this study, there were three delimitations:

- First, restricting the study to only allow participants to take part if they had a traditional working arrangement (i.e., worked in an office, fully based at the organisation location, with set working hours) prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Second, restricting it to only participants who at the time of the study had the ability to work flexibly (i.e., located remotely and/or with flexible hours).
- Third, for the purpose of the study, FWAs referred to an arrangement set out by the employees' organisation and/or agreed with their leader where they could split their work location and hours between the office and working from home (working from home refers to working from a New Zealand residence, not overseas).

## Summary

FWAs have been increasing over the past few decades. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the increase in the number of employees in FWAs which has put organisations under strong pressure to continue delivering on the expectations of employees who prefer to work flexibly. It is important for organisations to proactively understand FWAs as a management strategy and understand the impact on employees. Failing to do so may result in missing out on both positive and negative impacts on employees, which could ultimately affect organisational performance. MCT and the JD-R model provides a theoretical framework for the study to examine the impact of FWAs, as a management strategy, on employee experiences and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing. A quantitative correlational study was developed and conducted to respond to the research question. Data were collected from an online survey. All participants were working in organisations with FWAs in New Zealand. The data were analysed to determine if relationships exist between the moderating variable of FWAs as a management strategy on employee experiences, and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing. The study aims to help organisations gain a better understanding of FWAs and the need for management strategies in the new work environment. This study also aims to demonstrate that while FWAs have earned their place in today's workforce, management strategies are required to support organisational optimisation in the new working environment.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature, commencing with the concept of work arrangements in organisations (historically and current), followed by an analysis on the development of FWAs. The review then focuses on FWAs as a management strategy, and how FWAs and work demand impact employees' perceived productivity and mental wellbeing. Finally, the literature review focuses on the theoretical frameworks that will guide the study to respond to the research question better – MCT and JD-R model. The final section will present the conclusion of this chapter.

Thus, the objectives of this chapter are as follows:

- Examine literature on the main constructs of FWAs, management strategies, employee experiences, employee perceived productivity, mental wellbeing, theoretical frameworks;
- Identify and assess the critical research gaps in the literature concerning the research objective

### Literature Search and Review Methods

The methodology used in this literature review draws on three primary sources of information. The database of Massey University's Online Library was the initial and main source used to locate literature. This source provided two methods of searching. The first method was to access Article Databases via the Massey University Library Portal, while the second was to conduct a direct search in Massey University's Library Collection. The main subject area I searched under in the Massey University Library Portal was 'Business & Management' in databases like 'Google Scholar'. The Article Databases provides access to a large selection of scholarly papers and journals from specific subject areas.

Combinations of the following search terms helped generate results for the literature review: AWAs, FWAs, working arrangements pre/post COVID-19/pandemic, new way of working, telecommuting, traditional work arrangements, working from home, management strategies, management control, work demand, employee experiences, employee perceived productivity, employee mental wellbeing, mental health, post COVID-19 impacts, job demands, job resources.

While MCT and the JD-R model has roots back to the early 2000s, and the history of AWAs required consideration back a few decades, there was a concerted focus on the literature between 2019 and 2023 to ensure alignment with contemporary issues and findings.

### Work arrangements in organisations

For much of the twentieth century, work was traditionally described in terms of a full-time, regular employment model defined as “jobs where work is performed on a fixed schedule, at the organisation's place of business, under the organisation's control, and with mutual expectation of continued employment.” (Kalleberg, 2000, p. 257). A ‘traditional job’ can be considered one that pays a wage or salary, frequently has an implicit or explicit contract for a continued employment relationship, has a regular work schedule and regular earnings, and is under the supervision of the organisation that is paying the salary (Abraham et al., 2017). For the purpose of this study, a “traditional job” will be referred to as a traditional work arrangement.

However, more recently, alternative work arrangements (AWAs) have increased in number and variety and are becoming increasingly popular in research (Boeri et al., 2020; Burchardt & Maisch, 2019; Hunter, 2019; Salvo et al., 2022). According to Hunter (2019), these trends are being driven not only by technological advances, but also by cultural shifts as employees demand more flexibility. AWAs, defined by both working conditions and employee relationships with their employer, are heterogeneous in nature and have seen many changes throughout history (Mas & Pallais, 2020). An AWA in the literature is defined as a “nontraditional job” an AWA could involve an employee hired by a temporary employment agency, an independent contractor working for various clients, an independent contractor for a single client, an employee working from home, or an employee with a flexible or irregular schedule (Mas & Pallais, 2020). Part-time and full-time employment is also considered an alternative work arrangement, as this is an important job characteristic for an employee seeking flexibility in their employment (Mas & Pallais, 2020).

Defining AWAs presents some challenges for a single review due to its heterogeneous nature. According to Goldin (2014), “workplace flexibility is a complex, multidimensional concept”. The term AWAs encompasses a wide range of different manifestations of work in the workplace, from high-skill freelancers who choose not to be employed in order to have greater work-life flexibility, to low-wage service workers who are on call for unpredictable work hours and barely able to make a living, to workers with long-term employment contracts who work where and

when they want. The term AWAs might encompass all of these and other types of work arrangements (Spreitzer et al., 2017).

Work arrangements such as working hours and contract periods differ substantially from country to country (Mas & Pallais, 2020). In the United States, in the last few decades, there have been significant organisational and technological advancements that have influenced and impacted the structure of work (Mas & Pallais, 2020). The internet and advances in information technology (IT) have altered the cost of work arrangements, making it simpler for organisations to allow employees to work at a location other than the organisations physical location, and provide them with flexible schedules, or to schedule employees as needed (Lambert & Henly, 2012). According to a survey of nearly 10,000 employees in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, Spain, the UK, and the United States, 89% of these employees believe that flexible working should become the norm, and 54% would change jobs to achieve a better work-life balance (Hunter, 2019). The digital era has amplified FWAs, (Hirsch-Kreinsen, 2016) and the media has made flexible work practices appealing to the modern workforce (Yu et al., 2019). This is reflected in the resurgence of research into FWAs, which coincides with global economic changes that have resulted in greater intersectoral dependencies (Uddin et al., 2021). Therefore, the focus of this study will be on FWAs.

The most significant growth in employment is observed in work that goes beyond organisational boundaries (Spreitzer et al., 2017). The nature of work has evolved to encompass an organisation with a more permeable boundary, allowing for greater flexibility in the movement of work and employees both inside and outside (Boudreau et al., 2015). As a result, the significance of non-organisational work psychology is on the rise as it is relevant to understanding employee experiences beyond the boundaries of organisational settings (Barley & Kunda, 2001). In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of employees engaged in FWAs across various countries worldwide, with Europe and the United States reporting an increase of at least 17% and 16%, respectively (Spurk & Straub, 2020). It is reasonable to assume that with the increase in FWAs organisations has implemented FWAs as a means of enhancing employee engagement and productivity, as well as attracting and retaining talented employees (Huws et al., 2019; Spreitzer et al., 2017). The implementation of flexibility within an organisation to enhance agility may pose considerable challenges for its employees. However, providing flexibility to meet the demands of employees can result in a more favourable experience for the employee (Spreitzer et al., 2017).

The literature of this study provides insights into the development of FWAs, current factors to be considered regarding FWAs, how FWAs have influenced management strategies, the

importance of employee experiences for an organisation, and the effects of FWAs on employee perceived productivity and mental wellbeing.

### The development of flexible work arrangements

The first flexible working concept (referred to as FWAs for the purposes of this study) was introduced by Jack Nilles, suggesting the term 'telecommuting' in the 1970s, when he was working remotely on a complicated NASA communication system (Yu et al., 2019). Nilles advanced the teleworking and telecommuting concept from the perspective of traffic reduction and organisational benefit (Nilles, 1975; Nilles, 1988). The International Telework Association and Council, later renamed Telework Coalition, was founded in 1993 to promote telework with the goals of promoting work-life balance, enhancing employment opportunities, and reducing transportation and associated pollution. Since 2000, following the widespread adoption of advanced computers and the internet, telecommuting had grown in popularity among large organisations globally (Yu et al., 2019).

Telework, telecommuting, remote work, e-work, and virtual work are common terms for working from home (Sullivan, 2003). These terms all apply to the concept of using IT to enable employees to work from home or at a location other than the organisation's physical location. Telecommuting has often drawn the attention of researchers who want to learn more about its potential benefits and disadvantages. As discussed above, initial research interest in teleworking, or the concept of working remotely, was sparked in the 1970s, when the term "working from home" was established to refer to working away from the office, primarily through technological connections, as a substitute for travelling (Nilles, 1975). Later, Nilles (1988) focused on various types of telecommuting and offered it as a work option to reduce commuting trips. Mokhtarian (1991) then defined and discussed the various aspects of telecommuting in depth in 1991.

Telecommuting gained widespread acceptance in the early years after its introduction. Several states in the United States and many European countries began implementing telecommuting, as is made evident by Mokhtarian (1991). Teleworking, as defined by Moon and Stanworth (1997), refers to a flexible employment arrangement that involves remote work, distance work, or telecommuting. This type of work is enabled through the use of information and communication technologies. A more recent definition of teleworking is that of Solís (2017), who defines teleworking as a method of arranging and/or conducting work using IT, in which work that can be done away from the employer's workplace on a regular basis is done so. It is evident from the above literature that telecommuting is a flexible work arrangement that

enables employees to transition from their regular work hours from the organisation's physical location to working from home, client premises or offices, or while on the road travelling utilising suitable technology for communication purposes. Therefore, telecommuting will be referred to as FWAs or flexible working/work in this study, which will refer to an arrangement set out by an organisation or agreed with management where an employee can split their work location and hours between the office and working from home.

The growing interest in flexible workplaces has resulted in an increase in studies looking into various types of FWAs (Garrett et al., 2017; Morrison & Macky, 2017; Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2020). Along with increasing workplace flexibility within certain organisations, "coworking spaces" and other alternative FWAs have emerged recently, giving freelance startups and remote employees a new way to work (Yu et al., 2019).

### Contemporary considerations of flexible work arrangements

The literature on FWAs prior to the COVID-19 pandemic identified socio-demographics, job characteristics, attitudes, and commuting are influential factors in determining flexible working behaviour (Asgari et al., 2014; Bagley & Mokhtarian, 1997). Women are more likely to work flexibly due to childcare reasons, while older people are less likely to utilise it. Education, income, prior experience, and occupation also influence flexible working choice and frequency (Bernardino & Ben-Akiva, 1996; Shabanpour et al., 2018). The literature reviewed indicates that there are several factors that have an influence on an individual's preference towards FWAs. Research suggests it is essential to take these factors into account while investigating FWAs. It is reasonable to suggest that there are more factors that may have impacted an individual's preference towards FWAs subsequent to the pandemic, which will need to be considered in this field of research.

The literature on FWAs during and after the pandemic is limited but growing – pre and post pandemic, Nguyen and Armoogum (2021) investigated the factors that influenced flexible working behaviour in Vietnam. Nguyen and Armoogum (2021) conducted a second study in Vietnam to examine gender differences in flexible working perceptions and attitudes. Beeckman et al. (2020) investigated Belgian perceptions of FWAs. Beck and Hensher (2020) conducted an online survey at the beginning of the pandemic to determine how individual's travel patterns and activities, and FWAs, in Australia had changed. Balbontin et al. (2021) analysed FWAs in South Africa, South America, and Australia to determine how often individuals would work flexibly each week during the pandemic. The National Bureau of Economic Research in the United States conducted the most exhaustive survey to examine

the persistence of flexible working after the pandemic and found that 20% of full workdays were conducted from home in the post-pandemic period (Barrero et al., 2021).

The literature above focuses on understanding the perceptions and attitudes towards FWAs during the pandemic. Given post-pandemic research is still exploring FWAs and highlighting the preferences of individuals (Barrero et al., 2021). It is reasonable to suggest that understanding individuals' perceptions and attitudes towards FWAs is important for future research. For the purpose of this study, perceptions and attitudes will not be examined.

The pandemic has brought about significant changes in the workplace, particularly with regard to FWAs. Prior to the pandemic, the majority of employees either did not have the opportunity or were reluctant to work flexibly (Kaushik & Guleria, 2020). However, as a result of the pandemic, employees and employers who had the ability to work flexibly were forced to make such arrangements (Green et al., 2020). Several studies conducted during the pandemic aimed at understanding the changes in flexible working behaviour. However, it was observed that many of these studies employed a data descriptive approach instead of a characterisation approach (Mohammadi et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has been identified as a cause for significant changes in human behaviour, particularly in relation to risk perception and employee productivity in flexible working settings (Mohammadi et al., 2022). This study addresses a gap in the existing literature by examining the impact of FWAs in the post-pandemic era, with a specific focus on employees who began working flexibly during the pandemic. The study aims to examine the effects of this new work arrangement on employee perceived productivity and mental wellbeing.

This study further examines how FWAs can be used as a management strategy. As organisations increasingly adopt FWAs, the shift from office-based work to remote work necessitates a corresponding shift in managerial control. This shift entails a transition from direct management to remote management styles. Given the increasing prevalence of FWAs in contemporary organisations, coupled with the growing demand for FWAs among employees, it is worth exploring whether organisations have adopted FWAs as a management strategy. The following section discusses the impact of employee experiences on an organisation, followed by how management strategies changed post pandemic and further explores the literature on FWAs as a management strategy.

## Impact of Employee Experiences on an organisation

Employee experience is a people-first management philosophy that defines what works in organisations, by investigating workplace factors that have the greatest impact on employees (Plaskoff, 2017). It places employees at the centre of the equation, whereas most hiring managers focus on the transactional side of human relations (Panneerselvam & Balaraman, 2022). It is a combination of an organisation's cultural, physical, and technological environments that enables, empowers, and improves employees' overall evaluation of their workplace's positiveness (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Employee experience encompasses everything that employees encounter, big or small, good or bad, during their time employed by their organisation, from the time they apply for a job to the time they wish to leave as an alumna (Farndale & Kelliher, 2013; Panneerselvam & Balaraman, 2022). A positive employee experience can lead to increased employee engagement, creating a cycle of positive culture, continued positive experiences, and sustained engagement (Maylett & Wride, 2017). Organisations are increasingly investing in employee experience. Employee experience and engagement are suggested to be linked, but employee experience is the means to achieve the latter objective in a long-term way (Panneerselvam & Balaraman, 2022).

Employee experience does not replace employee engagement; rather, it is a continuation of it (Tucker, 2020). Employee engagement is a more top-down approach in which employers decide on policies, processes, practices, and systems that are likely to have an impact on people and their jobs, whereas employee experience places employees at the centre of the discussion to examine factors of work and management practices that enable them to be successful continuously or those that limit their ability to deliver on their promise (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Measuring employee experience begins with a fundamental understanding of what employees expect and develops to identifying factors of support, empowerment, and enablement to be successful in jobs and roles (Whitter, 2022). Management continues to look for insights into how their organisations can ensure competitiveness through optimal organisational management and improved employee experiences – of which employee engagement is seen as a key component (Turner & Turner, 2020). Kahn (1990, p. 649) describes employee engagement as "the harnessing of an organisation members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". The cognitive component of employee engagement relates to employees' perceptions of the organisation, its executives, and working conditions. The emotional component focuses on the attitudes that employees have towards the organisation and its leaders, as well as how they feel about each

of those three components. The physical component of employee engagement relates to the physical efforts made by individuals to carry out their responsibilities. Therefore, assuming and carrying out an organisational role requires having both physical and mental capacity to be present, according to (Kahn, 1990).

According to Saks (2006) one way for employees to give back to their organisation is through their level of engagement, which for the purposes of this study, can be expressed as opportunities. In other words, depending on the resources provided by their employer, employees will choose to engage to varying degrees. As suggested earlier by Kahn (1990) putting more of oneself into one's work roles and investing more cognitive, emotional, and physical resources is a very profound way for people to react to an organisation's actions. Considering those perspectives, it is reasonable to assume that when employees feel supported by their organisation, and feel their organisation offers them opportunities to grow and develop, an employee will feel positive about their organisation. Conversely, if an employee does not feel supported by their organisation, and is experiencing challenges, an employee may feel negative about their organisation. Employee engagement is therefore more likely to be traded for resources and benefits offered by their employer. According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) the experience of engagement is characterised as a satisfying, positive state of mind related to one's work, and it has been linked to both good wellbeing and a positive work impact (Sonnentag, 2003). These positive experiences and emotions are likely to lead to positive work outcomes.

Employee wellbeing and emotional experiences are suggested to impact one another, according to Avolio et al. (2004). Despite this, research on organisations often overlooks how feelings and emotions affect behaviour. Emotions are a normal part of our psychological makeup and have an impact on people's behaviour in both their personal and professional lives. The importance of employee wellbeing is further reinforced by researchers, Perrin (2003) who found that senior management's interest in employee wellbeing was the most important driver of an employee's experience in the organisation.

### [Flexible work arrangements as a management strategy](#)

FWAs enable employees to work at different times and different locations while performing the same activities and having the same responsibilities and requirements. Despite the remote nature of work, it remains important for managers to develop the skills necessary to effectively supervise, maintain communication with, and optimise the performance of their team (Lautsch et al., 2009). This is still relevant for the post-pandemic era, as managers have had to adapt

to changing circumstances surrounding their leadership, as many now manage from a distance.

In a study conducted by Ipsen et al. (2021), a comparison was made between the perceptions of managers and employees regarding specific challenges. The findings revealed that there were certain areas where managers perceived a more challenging position compared to their employee counterparts. These included attending additional meetings, working extended hours, and experiencing reduced capacity to take breaks when necessary. Being distant from employees makes it challenging to organise creative work, making it difficult to find tasks for employees to complete, working closely with team members, and, most importantly, being able to understand how employees are feeling in their new situation. Another challenge that was presented involved communication, in which both employees and managers were tested on their ability to communicate effectively and consistently. Communication becomes more difficult than usual because people aren't always checking their emails or are otherwise unavailable. Further research supports the above literature, indicating that managers may face challenges in overseeing the actions of employees who engage in FWAs. As a potential solution, managers may opt to prioritise output controls as a means of addressing this challenge (Herath, 2007).

This assumption is in line with MCT, which suggests that when direct monitoring of employees is not possible, output controls will become more important, which means managers place more emphasis on targets, performance indicators and outcomes in managing their employees (Verburg et al., 2018). This approach to control is also called management control (Merchant & Van der Stede, 2012) or organisational control (Flamholtz, 1996) .

The feasibility of formal control mechanisms is impacted by two key attributes of employee behaviour: (1) the extent to which performance can be measured and (2) the extent to which it is understood which type of behaviour leads to what type of result. Output controls require good performance measures, while behaviour controls require an understanding of the desired behaviour (Eisenhardt, 1985; Ouchi, 1979). Additionally, both types of control require that the relevant characteristic can be observed: for output controls, the organisation must have information systems that allow performance measurement and reporting, and for behaviour controls, it must be able to monitor the desired behaviour (Groen et al., 2018). MCT offers a lens to understand the impact FWAs as a management strategy has on employees. This theoretical framework will be discussed in detail further in the literature review.

Lastly, the challenge in managing employees working flexibly lies in the reduced possibilities of monitoring employee behaviour (Allen et al., 2015; Bloom et al., 2015). Because flexible working is mostly implemented in an existing setting, with existing operations, procedures,

activities and policies, in general, similar controls will be present in flexible working and non-flexible working situations. The essence of FWAs is that they provide flexibility to the employees without impacting the organisation as a whole (Groen et al., 2018). As a result, when managers allow employees to work flexibly, they can often use the existing controls and apply these controls differently to employees that work flexibly and those employees who do not, by placing different levels of emphasis on them. Lautsch et al. (2009) found that around 25% of managers with experience in supervising employees working flexibly reported that they use written performance standards and performance feedback differently from those for non-flexible working employees. Accordingly, Richardson and McKenna (2014) found that employees working flexibly feel more pressure to meet performance objectives than those who do not work flexibly.

Understanding the changes in the workplace caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the adaptations made to mitigate its negative impact can be seen through the lens of a model that explains how people are affected by their work-related circumstances, in this case, the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). This model explains job stress and its consequences, such as burnout, sleep problems, and negative wellbeing, which are influenced by two major categories. These are the job requirements and job resources. Motivation, according to the model, arises when demands and resources are well-balanced. The JD-R model will be used as a lens to understand the relationship between managers and employees, in relation to the demands and resources of the organisation. This theoretical framework will be discussed in detail further in the literature review.

The challenge for organisations lies in developing strategies to effectively manage employees working from home and for both employees and organisations to reap the potential benefits while also ensuring employee wellbeing is protected and productivity is maintained. Effective strategies may include providing necessary equipment and support, communicating regularly, adjusting performance management, and training managers. Previous research on flexible working suggests that a leader who values communication and relationships with their employees will be the most effective at mitigating the negative aspects of flexible working, such as distance, isolation, and communication difficulties (Dahlstrom, 2013). According to Khalid (2020), a flexible working strategy involves various computer-based technical operation systems and software through workplace transformation, such as communication channels, virtual meetings, and operational automation and analytics for each department. In response to COVID-19, the speed at which organisations digitised and implemented workplace change increased much faster than previous workplace transformations (LaBerge et al., 2020).

## Impacts of flexible work arrangements on mental wellbeing and productivity

Workplace flexibility is no longer viewed as a benefit to employees, but as a necessity for organisations to remain competitive. As with all changes made within an organisation, FWAs have both positive and negative aspects. The adoption of a FWAs is typically presented as a planned decision that necessitates a phase of strategizing, preparation, and adjustment to enable organisations to adequately support employee's productivity and ensure they have balance between their work life and personal lives. However, the COVID-19 pandemic forced organisations to adopt this new way of working, without providing employees and organisations with the necessary skills and appropriate training for flexible working (Allen et al., 2015; Konradt et al., 2003; Molino et al., 2020). Many organisations foresee that FWAs will become more widespread post-pandemic as organisations have already paid the fixed cost of setting up work solutions for their employees at their homes (Bartik et al., 2020).

In addition to the benefits to organisations, there are direct benefits to employees. Most importantly, FWAs reduces daily commuting time and time costs, and gives employees more freedom to care for their families. FWAs allows employees to work when they are most productive, and it can be useful for avoiding coworker distractions, especially in open plan offices (Kim & De Dear, 2013; Tavares, 2017). Employees can take a break from their offices and focus on organising an individualised approach to their work-life balance, which can encourage a healthier lifestyle, which benefits both physical and mental health. Previous research has also shown that FWAs can improve employee wellbeing by giving employees more flexibility, increasing employee productivity, and allowing employees to better balance their home and work lives (Mann & Holdsworth, 2003).

While there are advantages to FWAs, there are also significant disadvantages. Employees who work from home have fewer opportunities to socialise with coworkers and may have fewer physical movements, such as walking between different meeting sites. Furthermore, prolonged screen exposure from full-time computer work can cause weariness, lethargy, headaches, and eye-related issues. Full-time working from home without face-to-face interactions and social support on a daily basis may contribute to mental disorders such as social isolation and depression in persons who live alone. For others, blurred work-life boundaries make it difficult to psychologically separate from work, increasing stress and worry (Evanoff et al., 2020; Majumdar et al., 2020; Mann & Holdsworth, 2003; Tavares, 2017). Balancing work schedules around other family members is a typical area of concern in work-life boundaries, where for some parents, work time becomes 'porous' since they may need to

take care of domestic tasks and run errands in between work meetings (Messenger et al., 2017).

The sudden shifts to working from home and other circumstances connected with the COVID-19 pandemic provide a unique setting for investigating FWAs impact on physical and mental wellbeing. Social and behavioural factors have the most visible effects on health. In addition to behavioural and social shifts, the COVID-19 pandemic has identified areas of need for physical space in home office environments when working flexibly. Not all workers have access to dedicated workstations at home, which can result in them sharing their workstations, such as with children who must attend school remotely, setting up makeshift desks, such as the dining table, or working in a variety of locations throughout the day, such as kitchen counters, sofas, coffee tables, and beds (Bouziri et al., 2020).

Considering the above perspectives, it is reasonable to assume that a detailed understanding of the factors in this new way of working that could impact physical and mental wellbeing is critical to ensuring positive impacts for employees who may work flexibly in the future. Organisations and employees require insights on how to create optimal work conditions for workers who choose or are required to work flexibly in order to minimise negative health impacts. Adopting FWAs that includes some time in the office and some time at home could help to reduce the negative effects of working from home (Green et al., 2020).

## Theoretical Frameworks

This section presents the theoretical framework used to guide this study. The theoretical approach in a study represents the researcher's theoretical approach and serves as a critical filter for selecting and interpreting data. The theoretical framework can be described as the foundation, the scaffolding, the frame of the study (Merriam, 1998). The research paradigm and the literature linked to the research objective influence the theoretical framework. Through a presentation and analysis of the concepts, terms, definitions, models, and theories, a thesis is formed for the study's importance (Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009). MCT and the JD-R model offer a lens to understand the research objective of the study, which is to expand our understanding on the impact of FWAs as a management strategy, on the relationship between work demand and employee perceived productivity and mental wellbeing.

## Management Control Theory

MCT offers a lens to understand the impact FWAs as a management strategy have on employee perceived productivity and mental wellbeing (Herath, 2007). MCT explores the dimensions of the relationship between management and an employee of an organisation, and how management control can be used as a tool to assist with the interactions between the manager and the employee, which in turn plays a role in the employees achievement of goals (productivity) and organisational success (Sljivic et al., 2015).

In recent years, organisations have experienced numerous changes in their organisational structures and business processes as a result of the changing business environment (Shahul Hameed et al., 2022). In response, patterns of management control in organisations have changed, and management theorists are paying increasing attention to the changes in management control systems (Herath, 2007). This is even more evident post the COVID-19 pandemic (Shahul Hameed et al., 2022). In any organisation, the management control system defines a set of values and guidelines for the entire organisation, and influences task completion competency and performance (Liu et al., 2010). Every control system's overall goal should be the organisation's survival and growth, as well as the employees job satisfaction and personal development (Herath, 2007).

According to Simons (1995), control entails managing the inherent tension between creative innovation and predictable goal achievement, so that both are transformed into profitable growth. This viewpoint is more practical for an organisation where features such as increased competition, rapidly changing markets, new organisational forms, and customer orientation are more visible than in other organisations. The idea that organisations have many facets is the foundation of Simons (1995) concept. They are also social systems, which are collections of people brought together to meet both social and personal needs. Internal decision-making processes are influenced by group norms and patterns of power and influence. Organisations are also partnerships between self-interested people who balance their own demands with those of the organisation.

In any organisation, it is assumed that some level of control is required to keep things running smoothly (Herath, 2007). According to Merchant (1985) control, as the term applies to a management function, involves influencing human behaviour because it is people that make things happen in an organisation. In other words, management must take steps to ensure that employees do what is best for the organisation. The literature suggests that several factors contribute to the need for control, including a lack of direction, motivational issues, and personal limitations (Merchant, 1985). The absence of adequate control can have a variety of

negative organisational consequences. On the contrary, having too much control can be detrimental to an organisation's ability to function effectively and efficiently: tight control may limit the organisation's flexibility and ability to innovate. On the other hand, it may increase operational costs and employee pressure. Therefore, maintaining an optimal balance of stability and flexibility through control is critical and has always been a significant challenge for organisations.

The literature holds a large number of definitions of management control. The modern views of management control originated with the influential work of Robert Anthony who drew boundaries between management control, strategic planning, and operational control. Anthony (1988) defined management control as the set of processes used by management to acquire and manage resources in an effective and efficient way in order to achieve the organisation's goals. According to Garrison et al. (2003) management control refers to the actions taken by management to increase the chances of achieving the objectives set during the planning stage. It also involves ensuring that all parts of the organisation operate in line with organisational policies. Many theorists agree that the term "management control systems" has many different meanings and conveys different ideas and meanings to different people depending on the context in which it is used or discussed. Traditional management control theorists believe that management control occurs within the organisation and that structures and strategies play important roles in control.

Anthony (1988) then went on to clarify the nature of management control: Management control is a tool used by managers in their interactions with one another and with their employees. It is a people-centered procedure. The focal points of management control are line managers. They plan the implementation of strategies and the achievement of goals, and they are the people who must influence others and whose performance is evaluated. The framework of management control derived from the literature therefore consists of two major dimensions: Management control systems; and achieving organisational goals and objectives. These two dimensions are considered to be influencing and reshaping the performance and behaviour of the organisation and its employees.

Using Anthony's explanation of the nature of management control (Anthony, 1988), understanding the dimensions which influence the framework of management control, and looking back at the literature, post-pandemic era – managers have had to adapt to changing circumstances surrounding their leadership, as many managers now manage from a distance. This is due to many organisations adopting a more flexible working arrangement to attract and retain employees while also improving employee engagement and productivity (Huws et al., 2019). However, managers still need to learn how to supervise, maintain contact with and get

the best out of their team even though they are out of 'sight'. FWAs are more appealing to the modern workforce, and this is reflected in the uplift of research into FWAs (Uddin et al., 2021). It is clear that the MCT provides valuable insights into the effects of FWAs as a management tool on the relationships between managers and employees, and how it helps achieve organisational goals. This understanding is particularly relevant in the post-pandemic world, where there have been significant changes to management control. By using a theoretical lens, we can gain a deeper understanding of these impacts and changes.

### Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model

The JD-R model is another theory that assists in exploring the research objective of this study. The JD-R model offers a lens to understand the relationship between managers and employees, influenced by the job demands and job resources of an organisation.

The JD-R model was introduced in 2001 to identify possible antecedents of burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) and is currently a popular framework to investigate the relationships between job characteristics and employee well-being. The JD-R model proposes that working conditions can be divided into two main categories, job demands and job resources, which are associated with various outcomes in different ways (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Job demands are those aspects of a job that necessitate a significant amount of physical or mental effort and are hence associated with physiological and/or psychological expenses, (e.g., high work pressure, an unpleasant physical environment, and emotionally challenging customer engagement). According to Demerouti et al. (2001), achieving work-related goals requires additional effort in the presence of excessive job demands, thus resulting in exhaustion. Employees start to invest more time to meet higher job demands negatively impacting their work life balance. Initially, they tend to exert maximum physical and mental effort to effectively manage occupational stress (known as "adjustive reaction"), even if it means jeopardising their health (wellbeing). This problem worsens when the job market has a high unemployment rate, forcing employees to stay on the job (Meyer & Allen, 1991). As a result of the increased workload, time pressure, and work-life imbalance, employees may experience burnout, which could jeopardise their health. Burnout is associated with increased job demands. Employees suffer from burnout if they are unable to effectively and efficiently manage their workload within the time constraints. As a result, the organisation's top management would initially face low employee engagement and commitment, followed by a high intention to leave the organisation (Hu et al., 2011). Given that many people face high

job demands while remaining healthy, the question of what keeps people healthy in these situations arises. According to Demerouti et al. (2001), the answer is health-protecting factors known as resources. Job resources are physical, social, and organisational job characteristics that help employees achieve their goals, reduce job demands and their associated costs, or promote personal growth and development. Job resources include a variety of factors (such as management support, supervisor feedback, skill development, and autonomy) that motivate employees and mitigate the effects of increased job demands (Demerouti et al., 2001). Job resources can be intrinsically motivating by promoting growth and learning, or extrinsically motivating by assisting in the achievement of work objectives. Rich et al. (2010) enlarge this definition through the differentiation between hindering and challenging job demands. Challenging job demands may promote employee's personal growth and future gains and tend to be perceived as opportunities to learn, whereas hindering job demands may thwart employee's personal growth and tend to be perceived as constraints or barriers (Rich et al., 2010). Job resources are not only required for meeting high job demands, but they also have their own importance. The job characteristics model highlighted three critical job resources: autonomy, task significance, and feedback (Hackman, 1980). The concept of job resources is rooted in conservation of resources theory, which holds that human motivation is primarily focused on the ability to maintain and accumulate resources (Hobfoll, 2001).

The two categories of demands and resources form the basis of two, essentially independent, processes: the health impairment process and the motivational process. High job demands increase the risk for burnout and lead to negative outcomes, such as health complaints or turnover intentions, whereas job resources play a motivational role, stimulate work engagement and foster positive organisational outcomes, such as performance or organisational commitment (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Furthermore, the absence of job resources leads to burnout, whereas job resources can also buffer the impact of job demands on burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

The JD-R model advocates for a variety of resources that can reduce the negative health effects of work demands while also facilitating attainment. It is consistent with other models in that autonomy, social support, and other factors can be viewed as personal resources that mitigate job stress. The JD-R model is therefore both rigorous and flexible (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Numerous studies (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) have used the JD-R as a theoretical framework to investigate how job demands and resources influence employee wellbeing and performance.

The JD-R model offers a theoretical lens to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships between managers and employees, influenced by job demands and job resources, specifically

understanding and exploring the impact job demands have on employee mental wellbeing. Job demands, such as workload, time constraints, and interpersonal interactions, are not necessarily negative, but they do require significant effort from employees. Ongoing exposure to job demands depletes employees' energy and can lead to sources of job stress (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The JD-R model further assists in understanding the impact job resources have on employees achieving organisational goals and objectives, and how job resources can improve employee mental wellbeing. Employee wellbeing can have a significant impact on business outcomes, as measures of wellbeing such as burnout and psychological distress are negatively correlated with work performance and positively correlated with absenteeism (Schaufeli et al., 2009; Sears et al., 2013).

Both MCT and the JD-R model offer a lens for a deeper understanding of the research objective of the current study. MCT explores the dimensions of the impact FWAs as a management strategy has on employee perceived productivity and mental wellbeing, which in turn plays a role in an employee's achievement of goals and organisational success. To understand the different aspects of flexible working, management strategies, employee productivity, and organisational achievements, organisations need to have a deeper understanding of the connection between managers and employees. More importantly, it is crucial to recognize the factors in the organisation and an employee's job that affect their mental wellbeing and productivity. This is where the JD-R model can be useful, as it provides a framework to comprehend the interaction between managers and employees, driven by the job demands and resources in the organisation.

The integration of MCT and the JD-R model offers organisations a comprehensive framework for understanding the rationale behind the effectiveness of a specific recommendation in the context of the contemporary work environment. Both frameworks demonstrate the ongoing interaction between organisations and their employees and are particularly useful in providing guidance to organisations by drawing on decades of research to identify effective strategies for the organisation.

## Summary

Over the past few decades, more organisations have been adopting FWAs. These arrangements have undergone various changes over time, but they are becoming more prevalent due to trends in society, advancements in technology, and cultural shifts. Many employees are now seeking greater flexibility in their work arrangements.

The research study and literature review focused on FWAs, which are agreements between an organisation and its employees that allow them to divide their work hours and location between the office and home. With FWAs, employees can work at different times and locations while still carrying out the same activities and responsibilities they would have if working fixed hours at the office. Organisations have had to adapt their management strategies to proactively understand FWAs as a management strategy and understand the impact on employees. Failing to do so may result in missing out on both positive and negative impacts on employees, which could ultimately affect organisational performance. The challenge for organisations lies in developing strategies to effectively manage employees working from home and for both employees and organisations to reap the potential benefits while also ensuring employee wellbeing is protected and productivity is maintained.

Studies have shown that FWAs can have both positive and negative effects on employee productivity and mental wellbeing. However, there is a research gap in understanding the connection between FWAs as a management strategy, an employee's experience with flexible work, their perceived productivity, and mental well-being.

## Chapter 3: Research Methodology

### Introduction

Chapter 2 provided a review of research literature on the concept of work arrangements in organisations (historically and current), an analysis of the development of FWAs, and a review of FWAs as a management strategy, with further focus on how FWAs impacts employee perceived productivity and mental wellbeing. Following this, the literature looked at the impact of work demands on employee perceived productivity and mental wellbeing, with the last section focusing on the theoretical frameworks that will guide the study to better understand the research objective. The research review provided a background for the development of the research model and research questions that will be discussed in Chapter 3.

This chapter presents the research methodology for this study and outlines the process for developing the research methodology. According to Scotland (2012), a methodology is the approach or action plan that lies behind the choice and implementation of different research methods. The methodology defines and is influenced by the goals of analysis, questions, and design of the study. Methodologies can influence method preferences, align with the researcher's field of study and support or deter the philosophy's use and/or development, (Carter & Little, 2007). Methods are the specific techniques and procedures used for data collection and analysis, (Scotland, 2012), and are unique ways to collect and evaluate data, such as questionnaires and open interviews, (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

The research objective of this study is to examine the impact of FWAs, as a management strategy, moderating the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing. Choosing an appropriate research method is a critical decision for doing effective academic research. As Basias and Pollalis (2018) state, it is based primarily on aligning your research objectives to the characteristics of various research procedures and understanding which would best 'fit' the research topic in question.

This chapter begins with a discussion on the research design overview, focusing on the research paradigm, and ontological and epistemological considerations deemed appropriate for this study. The data collection procedure is introduced, outlining the characteristics of the sample size, and describing the instrumentation and various scales used in the research design. The chapter concludes with a review of the ethical matters that were considered before the research was conducted.

## Research Design

### Research Philosophy

A research paradigm is the ability of a researcher to understand and communicate what they believe to be true about the nature of reality, what can be known about it and how we go about attaining this knowledge, (Jenkins, 2018). According to Scotland (2012) the elements of philosophical assumptions include: ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods. However, as noted by Blanche et al. (2006) the research process consists of three elements: ontology, epistemology and methodology. A research paradigm is according to them an all-encompassing framework of interrelated practise and analysis that determines the nature of research along with these elements. Methods will be explored as part of the elements of philosophical assumptions to thoroughly understand and attain knowledge of the data collected for the field of study. In other words, our research paradigm is our understanding of the reality and the manner in which we study it.

Ontological and epistemological aspects involve what is generally called the worldview of an individual which has a major impact on the perceived relative significance of the elements of reality. Ontology relates to the nature of reality, (Petty et al., 2012). Ontological assumptions identify with the qualities a researcher holds about reality, how it exists, what can be known as genuine and what can be accepted as factual. Epistemology is our belief as to how we should come to know the world. It is the theory of knowledge, (Devine et al., 2002). As noted by Guba and Lincoln (1994), epistemology poses the question, what is the nature of the relationship between the would-be knower and what can be known? Each paradigm has its own ontological and epistemological concepts. Since all conclusions are assumptions, researchers can never empirically prove or disprove the philosophical foundations of each research paradigm. All research paradigms have differing viewpoints on ontological and epistemological assumptions; therefore, researchers will conduct differing research approaches about the reality and knowledge of their study, (Scotland, 2012). The methodology and methods further reflect this.

This research largely adopts a positivist mentality. Positivism is the worldview that the only way to gain knowledge of the field of study is through sense interpretation and introspection, and analytical scientific methods, (Acton, 1951). As the researcher of this study, this is how I view the world, and therefore my research reflects this. Positivists claim that attempting to deduce or explain truths about the universe from supposed self-evident assumptions that are not solely based on interpretation of the meaning is pointless. Positivists find that understanding the field of study can be further developed by formulating theories, testing them

through observation and experimentation, and re-forming the theories according to what the research reveals. The research design supports this worldview.

On the ontological level, as noted by Antwi and Hamza (2015), positivists believe that reality is given objectively and can be assessed using properties that are independent of the researcher and instruments, therefore, information is objective and quantifiable. On an epistemological level, for positivists who developed primarily from the philosophical method of the nineteenth century, scientific explanation is the focus of the study (Tubey et al., 2015). The positivist epistemology is one of objectivism which seeks to “explain and predict what is happening in the social world through the search for regularities and causal relations between its constituent elements”, (Burrell & Morgan, 2017, p. 5; Scotland, 2012). Furthermore, according to Neuman and Kreuger (2003), positivists see social science as a structured method for integrating deductive inference with detailed observations of individual behaviour, to discover and validate a set of probabilistic causal laws that can be used to predict general trends of human behaviour.

Positivist methodology focuses on the description of relationships and seeks to recognise the factors that could affect the outcomes, (Scotland, 2012). According to Crotty (1998), methodology is the approach or action plan that lies behind the choice and implementation of different research methods. Methodology defines and is influenced by goals of analysis, questions, and design of study. Methodologies can influence method preferences, align with the researchers field of study and support or deter the philosophy’s use and/or development, (Carter & Little, 2007). Positivist researchers focus on explaining behaviour by means of objective evidence using structured methods such as questionnaires and psychological experiments with precise questions, (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). As noted by Rehman and Alharthi (2016), positivists use validity, reliability, objectivity, accuracy and generalizability to assess the rigour of quantitative research designed to identify, predict and validate scientific relationships in fairly controlled environments. Therefore, a quantitative methodology supports inquiry into a research question when done by a positivist. The quantitative data used by positivist researchers to answer research questions can be obtained by using closed-ended questionnaires, surveys, inventories, using true experiments, large-scale and/or small-scale surveys and checklists among others. Analysis of the data takes place using statistical methods and mathematical operations, (Tubey et al., 2015). In order for a positivist’s research to be considered credible and valid, the study should be based on a sound argument that explains the chosen methods and procedures involved in the data collection and analysis, (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016),

## Positivism and Quantitative Research

To explore the research topic, and emerging themes, this study employs a quantitative approach and uses a closed-ended questionnaire. There are various definitions for quantitative research; Creswell (1994, pp. 1 - 2) defined quantitative research as “an enquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers, and analysed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the predictive generalisations of the theory hold true”. Punch (1998, p. 4) defined quantitative research as an “empirical research where the data are in the form of numbers”, and Gay et al. (2011, p. 627), defined quantitative research as “the collection of numerical data in order to explain, predict and/or control phenomena of interest”. For this research topic, the definition most relatable when analysing the research question is Gay et al. (2011), a collection of numerical data for the purpose of explaining, predicting, and/or controlling phenomena of interest.

This study aims to examine the impact of FWAs, as a management strategy, moderating the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing.

The use of quantitative methods allows researchers to establish correlations between variables, describe current situations and sometimes explain causal relationships between variables, (Mertler, 2016). This is relevant for the research as different relationships exist between the constructs measured independently; however, little is known about the relationships proposed in this study, specifically the moderating relationships. Therefore, a correlational research design was adopted for this quantitative study to examine the relationships between the independent variable, employee experiences, and the dependent variables, perceived productivity and mental wellbeing, and examine the moderating impact of FWAs, as a management strategy, on the relationships of the independent and dependent variables.

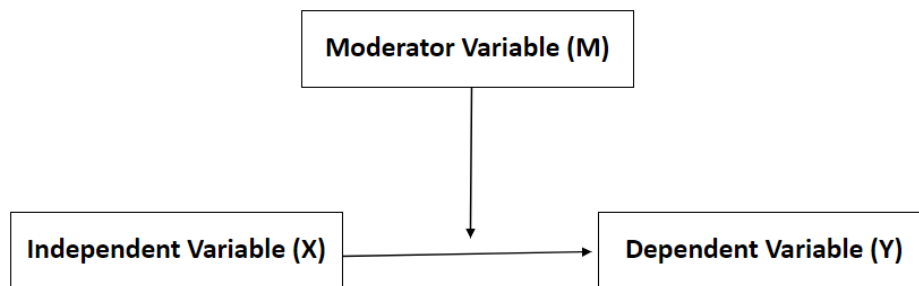
The research design primarily describes the relationships among variables, without seeking to establish a causal connection. According to Woodworth (1938), quantitative research methods are divided into two major categories: independent variables and dependent variables; experimental and correlational approaches. Correlational methods measure two or more characteristics before calculating their correlation, while experimental methods manipulate variables. In Woodworth’s view, these two approaches offer equal value, correlational research should be distinguished from experimentation, but it should be viewed as equal to it rather than superior or inferior. Correlational research investigates the

relationship between or among selected variables in a sample by using correlational statistics. Correlational research determines the degree, strength and type of relationship between variables, and does not determine cause and effect (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). The objective of correlational research is to examine how the differences in one variable relate to differences in other variables (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Correlational studies, like descriptive research, do not modify the variables under investigation, and the research does not strive to determine cause or effect. Instead, correlational studies can be used to characterise or predict relationships, as well as to evaluate theoretical models of relationships (Shields & Smyth, 2016). A correlation occurs when one variable (X) increases and another variable (Y) decreases. A study that produces a correlation coefficient of 0.00 signifies that there is no association between the variables investigated (Curtis et al., 2016). It is only through research that a relationship can be demonstrated between two variables or the direction and strength of that relationship can be determined.

Moderation adds another layer of analysis and examines how the interaction of two independent variables (one independent variable and one moderating variable) influences the values of the dependent variable (Agarwal & Gupta, 2018; Baron & Kenny, 1986). The moderating variable (M) interacts with the independent variable (X) in explaining the variance in scores on the dependent variable (Y), as shown in Figure 1 (Stone-Romero & Anderson, 1994). That is, as the value of the moderator changes, the relationship between the other two variables changes, as measured, for example, by the value on the regression slope (Stone-Romero & Anderson, 1994; Zedeck, 1971). The moderating variable can have a strengthening or weakening effect on a linear relationship. The most important factor to consider when determining whether a variable modifies the relationship between two other variables is the word different, because if the relationship between two variables does not change when the value of the third variable changes, the third variable is not a moderator variable and must therefore be playing some other role, if any (Fritz & Arthur, 2017). A number of statistical methods have been developed to detect moderator variables and describe their effect (Zedeck, 1971). Of these, two strategies seem to have been used the most frequently: the subgrouping strategy (Arnold, 1982; Zedeck, 1971) and the moderated regression strategy (Stone & Hollenbeck, 1989; Zedeck, 1971). The moderated regression strategy will be used in this study. The moderated multiple regression strategy tests look for a statistically significant interaction between a moderator and another variable in predicting the values of the third variable by using ordinary least squares regression (Stone & Hollenbeck, 1989; Zedeck, 1971). Differences in the slopes of the Y on X regression coefficients at different levels of the moderator variable, M, indicate the intensity or degree of a relationship. Moderator variables are significant to research as they provide a more complete explanation of the precise

circumstances under which an observed correlation between two variables exists and whether this association is consistent across different scenarios (Fritz & Arthur, 2017). Chapter 4 will provide a detailed analysis of the research findings and the data analysis techniques used.

**Figure 1** Moderator Effects on Independent and Dependent Variables

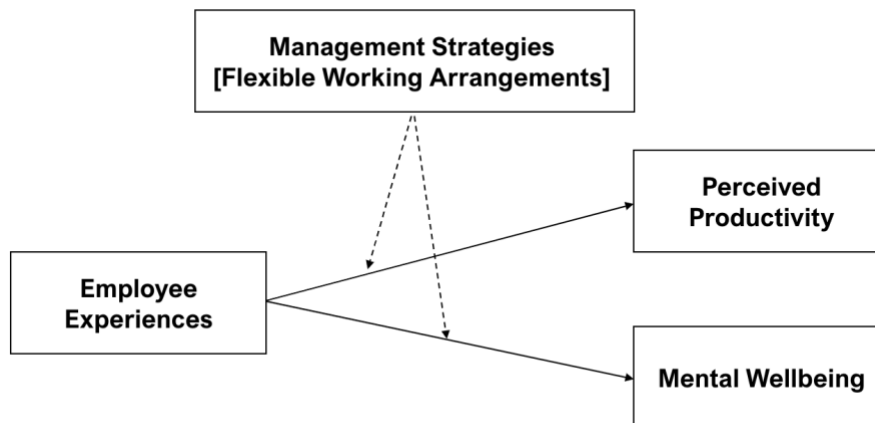


## Research Approach

### Research constructs

The objective of this study aims to examine the impact of FWAs, as a management strategy, moderating the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing. These relationships, specifically an employee's perceived productivity and mental wellbeing are important relationships to both employees and the organisations (Anitha, 2014). Based on the research reviewed in Chapter 2, the conceptual research model as shown in Figure 2 has been developed to propose the impact of FWAs, as a management strategy, moderating the relationship between employee experience and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing.

**Figure 2** Conceptual Research Model



The research model is similar to that developed and used by researchers Tanpipat et al. (2021) exploring the relationships between work demand on perceived productivity and organisational commitment, mediated by organisational norms on remote working and job motivation. In the conceptual research model developed for this study (refer to Figure 2), the focus is on the impact of FWAs, as a management strategy, moderating the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity, and mental wellbeing. Therefore, employee experiences are the independent variable and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing are the dependent variables.

In the following sections, the research constructs that make up the research objective, demonstrated in the conceptual research model, will be discussed. Before discussing these constructs, it's important to acknowledge changes in the constructs from the initial research objective of the study – initially the research objective of the current study aimed to explore the impact of FWAs, as a management strategy, on the relationship between work demand and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing. Work demand was the independent variable at one point in the study. This was due to an initial adaptation of the research model developed and used by Tanpipat et al. (2021), however, upon re-evaluation of the overall research objective of the study, and defining what the current study aims to explore, the work demand construct did not contribute to the research objective. The current study aims to help organisations utilise FWAs as a management strategy to understand how FWAs can moderate the relationships between employee experiences and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing. Although the work demand construct does not form part of the research objective or analysis, the concept is included briefly in the findings as an element of employee experiences underpinned by the JD-R model.

## **Employee Experiences**

Employee experiences is the independent variable in this study. The research study aims to explore the relationship between the independent variable, employee experiences, and the dependent variables. The JD-R model offers a theoretical lens to gain a deeper understanding of an employee's experience in an organisation, influenced by job demands and job resources. The JD-R model discusses two main categories that working conditions can be divided into: job demands and job resources, both of which are associated with various outcomes in different ways (Demerouti et al., 2001). The demands on employees by an organisation and the resources provided to employees by the organisation can impact an employee's experiences in either a positive or negative manner, expressed as opportunities or challenges in this study.

Work factors can have a considerable impact on employees' overall health and wellbeing, which in turn impacts job performance and other organisational outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Sears et al., 2013; Vander Elst et al., 2017). All occupations have different job demands that are specific to the role, industry, and workplace. This is also true for different organisations; each organisation will have different job demands amongst employees specific to an employee's role. While job demands (for example, workload, time constraints, and emotional interactions) are not necessarily negative, they require employees' efforts, and continued exposure to job demands depletes employees' energy reserves and can evolve into job stressors (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Vander Elst et al., 2017). Employees' psychological and physical health may suffer as a result of these job stressors (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Vander Elst et al., 2017). For instance, unmanaged work demands are frequently associated with burnout, which is characterised by chronic exhaustion, unfavourable work attitudes, and employee productivity (Wu et al., 2021). Resources like peer support, leadership, resilience, and social support can help employees cope with the negative effects and meet the demands of their jobs. Resources are a concept that includes situational aspects of the workplace and individual traits that facilitate the achievement of work objectives, lower the demands of the job and the costs associated with them, and have a direct impact on both individual and organisational wellbeing measures (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001).

In addition to being frequently used to predict employee wellbeing outcomes, the JD-R model has also been used to predict a variety of employee work-related attitudes, including work engagement, work enjoyment (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), job satisfaction (Kaiser et al., 2020) and acceptance of organisational change (Hetty van Emmerik et al., 2009). The model

also has the ability to predict employee behaviour and significant organisational outcomes, such as job performance, presenteeism (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009), absenteeism (Schaufeli et al., 2009), productivity, organisational commitment, employee turnover, and turnover intentions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Vander Elst et al., 2017). All encompassing, the JD-R model has the ability to measure and predict an array of factors and work characteristics that can and will impact an employee's overall experience in an organisation ranging from employee wellbeing to organisational commitment, to productivity and work engagement. It is evident that it is important to investigate the impact that job demands and resources can have on employees as this will have an impact on how they feel and experience different aspects of their organisation.

Therefore, the aim of the study under the employee experiences construct explores employee experiences in an organisation, with a specific focus on the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity, and employee experiences and mental wellbeing.

This study investigated the following hypotheses:

- H1: Employee experiences, expressed as opportunities, positively impact employee perceived productivity.
- H2: Employee experiences, expressed as challenges, negatively impact employee perceived productivity.
- H3: Employee experiences, expressed as opportunities, positively impacts employee mental wellbeing.
- H4: Employee experiences, expressed as challenges, negatively impacts employee mental wellbeing.

### **Perceived productivity**

Perceived productivity is a dependent variable in the research study. The research study aims to explore the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity. When referring to perceived productivity in the study, this refers to self-reported productivity, and not an employer considering how productive employees are.

Before understanding how employee experiences impacts perceived productivity, other factors need to be considered and evaluated that could impact productivity in the workplace. According to Tanpipat et al. (2021), to measure perceived productivity three factors need to be assessed: Concentration, Communication and Collaboration. Researchers suggest these three factors can positively or negatively impact employee productivity in the workplace,

especially when working from home. de Leede and Heuver (2016) noted employees' remote work productivity can also be influenced by leadership and organisational support. To maintain the working relationship among the organisation's members, Sullivan et al. (2013) noted that efficient remote work productivity required high and constructive communication. Employees may find it challenging to initiate work-related conversations if there is no precedence or leadership initiative. Additionally, remote working necessitates the use of information technology and the operation of devices such as personal computers, laptops, and cell phones, with employees being obliged to participate in collaborative activities. Nevertheless, flexible working has shown to have an impact on employees' concentration, lowering productivity. Researchers also suggested that concentration in the workplace can be affected by different work environments and the increase in additional workload during working from home (Stø & Vestre, 2020; Xiao et al., 2021).

As discussed above, FWAs, as a management strategy, acts as the moderating variable in the study. This will be discussed in more detail further in the chapter, however, for the purpose of understanding the drivers behind the perceived productivity construct, FWAs will be discussed accordingly.

As the current study took place near the end of 2022, after the COVID-19 restrictions eased, while organisations were implementing FWAs for their employees to flex between working from the office or working from home – the aim of the perceived productivity construct is to identify the impact FWAs (as a management strategy) has on the three factors used to measure perceived productivity: productivity, collaboration and communication.

The perceived productivity construct is similar to the construct tested and used by researchers Tanpipat et al. (2021) the questions were adapted to the current research study objective and the language was altered to ensure the questions were suited for the target population (i.e., New Zealand). To ensure retention of the existing reliability and validity of the perceived productivity construct, scales were used in their entirety. A similar 7-point Likert scale was used – the Thailand researchers requested participants to rate their level of performance on the statements from the least to the highest, versus the current research study requesting participants to rate their level of productivity, collaboration, communication on the statements from much worse to much better.

Therefore, the aim of the study under the perceived productivity construct is to examine the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity.

## **Mental wellbeing**

Mental wellbeing acts as the other dependent variable in the current study. The research study aims to examine the relationship between employee experiences and mental wellbeing.

To understand how employee experiences impact employee mental wellbeing, three basic components need to be unpacked to better understand the make-up of an employee's mental wellbeing. According to Meyer et al. (2012), employees who feel emotionally attached to their organisation have better psychological wellbeing, this can be referred to as affective commitment. Affective commitment is an important motivating factor that affects absenteeism and other key organisational outcomes (Tanpipat et al., 2021). Continuance commitment is the second component, which can be referred to as an employees' desire to stay in the organisation. The third component that can impact employee mental wellbeing is referred to as normative commitment, which is defined as the set of cultural factors that keep employees in an organisation. All three components relate to one another and play a vital role in an employees' mental wellbeing in a workplace.

According to Van Veldhoven et al. (2015) affective commitment and continuance commitment could predict participative leadership and organisational effectiveness. Machokoto (2020) looked at employee commitment during the COVID-19 pandemic and discovered that continuance commitment displayed a significant role in the emotional cost during the challenging circumstance. Organisational commitment is also tested in the context of remote working. Employees may demonstrate weaker performance and organisational commitment if they do not have control over the pace and quantity of the work they do.

Initially, the mental wellbeing questions were adapted from research completed by Every-Palmer et al. (2020). The research examined the state of the New Zealand population's wellbeing during the COVID-19 lockdown and how the lockdown impacted specific populations (e.g., essential workers, those with underlying health conditions and the elderly). The mental wellbeing questions that were adapted from Every-Palmer et al. (2020) research were sampled and tested by a small group of work colleagues (approximately 5 people) to allow for real-time feedback on the questions before it was published to the public of New Zealand (the pilot group will be discussed later on in the chapter). Following back received from the pilot group, it was evident that the mental wellbeing questions did not seem relevant to this study. Further evaluation of the questions, a decision was made to remove the mental wellbeing questions adapted from Every-Palmer et al. (2020) and continue researching to find questions that would fit with the adapted research model and allow for relevant research to be collected for the current study.

The Workplace Wellness Report undertaken by Southern Cross Health Insurance and Business New Zealand provides an overview of where New Zealanders stand in terms of health and wellbeing in the workplace (BusinessNZ & Southern Cross Healthcare Society, 2021). The research can help employers in several ways, including benchmarking for workplace wellness and how businesses can provide better support and lift productivity for their employees, as well as improve the health and wellbeing of their people. Although the report focussed on how an organisation (i.e., the employer) can better support their employees, the questions asked were relevant to my research question. Therefore, questions from the Workplace Wellness Report were adapted to suit my study. This is also the fifth edition of the Workplace Wellness Report providing a time series that can be used to monitor New Zealand's progress towards a safe and healthy work environment. This also indicates that the research is well-validated with good baseline data for the New Zealand population.

Another study completed in New Zealand appealed to my research, Remote Working during COVID-19 (O'Kane et al., 2020). The Remote Working during COVID-19 Report was prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic and aimed to understand employee experiences of remote working during the unprecedented times of the initial COVID-19 lockdowns, looking into the adjustments made by both individuals and organisations to enable working from home, and how this impacted employee wellbeing and productivity, both during lockdown and into the future. Although the study took place during the most unprecedented time of the COVID-19 pandemic, certain questions asked were relevant to my research question. Therefore, similar to the Workplace Wellness Report questions were adapted to suit my study.

Both studies appealed to my research, however the majority of the mental wellbeing questions in my study were adapted from the Workplace Wellness Report (BusinessNZ & Southern Cross Healthcare Society, 2021) due to the validity and reliability of the research.

To better understand the mental wellbeing construct, the following questions were asked:

- How have you found a flexible working arrangement? (i.e., the ease of flexible working versus traditional working arrangements), what challenges has flexible working presented, and what opportunities have flexible working presented?
- What wellbeing support does your organisation have in place, what support have they provided you while working flexibly, and how is your general stress?
- How have you found your mental health since being able to work flexibly?

Unlike the perceived productivity construct, the mental wellbeing construct does not have existing reliability and validity. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire will be discussed

further in the chapter, however, it is important to note that the internal reliability and validity of the mental wellbeing questions were tested before further data analysis was completed.

The aim of the current study under the mental wellbeing construct explores the direct relationship between employee experiences and mental wellbeing.

### **Flexible Work Arrangements**

FWAs as a management strategy is the moderating variable in the current study. The moderator interacts with the independent variable, making its relationship with the dependent variable stronger or weaker (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated FWAs due to the sudden need for organisations to reduce workplace density (Hunter, 2019). These sudden changes had a big impact on employee's views towards job stability, work performance, and perceived productivity. Employees were faced with mental stress which impacts their engagement to the organisation and job motivation. As a result, organisations (i.e., managers) struggle to manage the workload while maintaining employees' productivity and mental wellbeing (Forbes et al., 2020).

This study was conducted towards the end of 2022, after the lifting of the COVID-19 restrictions, organisations were introducing FWAs to their employees, allowing them to alternate between working from home and the office. The purpose of this construct is to examine how FWAs, as a management strategy, impacts the relationship between employee experiences and employee perceived productivity and mental wellbeing.

Many organisations have implemented FWAs in their organisation, and many employees prefer this 'new' way of working. Some employees have become so accustomed to working from home, many no longer want to come into the organisation's office location. However, studies have shown that FWAs contribute to increased productivity to a certain extent (i.e., employees still need to come into the office and work collaboratively in person with work colleagues to remain productive) (Xiao et al., 2021). Studies have also shown employees need to be aware of isolating themselves from the organisation as work life balance boundaries are blurred which will impact their mental wellbeing (Stø & Vestre, 2020; Xiao et al., 2021).

Therefore, the aim of the study under the flexible working arrangement construct explores the moderating effect on employee experiences and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing.

The study investigated the following hypotheses:

- H5: Management strategies have a more positive impact on the relationship between employee experiences, expressed as opportunities and employee perceived productivity.
- H6: Management strategies have a less negative impact on the relationship between employee experiences, expressed as challenges, and employee perceived productivity.
- H7: Management Strategies have a more positive impact on the relationship between employee experiences, expressed as opportunities, and employee mental wellbeing.
- H8: Management strategies have a less negative impact on the relationship between employee experiences, expressed as challenges, and employee mental wellbeing.

## Data Collection

### Questionnaire design

The foundation of positivism and quantitative research led to the decision to use a structured method of data collection in the form of a closed-ended questionnaire with precise questions guided by a reliable and validated research model. The use of questionnaires allows for the collection of data on a specific topic from many individuals (Akinci & Saunders, 2015). Questionnaires are a reliable research method because they use questions with consistent definitions, ensuring that everyone is asked the same questions in the same way. Questionnaires also adopt an impersonal nature as respondents are not able to build rapport and establish a connection with the researcher (Gliner et al., 2017). In this study, in line with positivist philosophies, the researcher remains independent of the respondents.

Questionnaires can be distributed in various way (e.g., post, in person, telephone). The questionnaire for the current study was administered online. Online questionnaires are typically more affordable, flexible, and can quickly reach a wider audience. The online questionnaire was developed using Massey University's online survey tool – Qualtrics. In line with quantitative research, the online questionnaire consisted of dichotomous ("Yes/No") questions, mostly closed-ended, fixed alternative questions that adhered to the methodological requirements of being an exhaustive and unidimensional (Sarantakos, 2017). A majority of the questions took the form of Likert scale questions. A likert scale consists of response categories that range between two extreme positions divided into points corresponding to a numeric scale. For example, possible answers on the ordinal scale "*Please rate how strongly you agree with the implementation of FWAs in your organisation*" ranged

from 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree', or possible answers to "*Please rate how your level of productivity in the following areas has changed since you have been able to work flexibly*" ranged from 'Much worse' to 'Much better'. A neutral category in the form of 'Not applicable' was included in certain questions to ensure certain questions covered all possible options, preventing participants from exiting the questionnaire if unable to answer certain questions.

Before the questionnaire was published, it was piloted. It was important to ensure the survey minimised participant confusion and allowed for full engagement. Therefore, the questionnaire was sampled and tested by five people in my organisation. The pilot group ranged from Marketing Managers analysing and providing feedback on the structure of my questions (i.e., do they understand what is being asked), to Customer Experience analysts that analyse and work with customer and distributor surveys who could provide a deeper level of feedback on the questions and specifically the use of scales (i.e., 5-point versus 7-point Likert scale). The pilot group were relevant to the study demographics as they were working at an organisation that had implemented FWAs. This allowed for real-time feedback on my questionnaire before it was published to the New Zealand public. The feedback received provided a different perspective on my questionnaire and allowed me to amend my questions and scales to ensure the New Zealand public would easily understand what was being asked and be more willing to participate in my research.

Once the questionnaire was finalised, a link to it was published on social media platforms, (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn), and shared via email utilising my network of friends, family, and work colleagues. The questionnaire was live over a 6-week period – the questionnaire link was shared and reposted on a weekly basis for the first four weeks, utilising illustrations to encourage engagement over this period. After four weeks, a final data push was completed, with a different focus and concerted effort – the Manawatu Business Chambers shared my survey link via the chambers mailing list to reach a wider audience. Contact was also made with the Auckland and Wellington Business Chambers, but unfortunately, these Business Chambers were unable to share the survey link amongst their member communications.

Participants were provided with an information sheet and consent form detailing the research intent, who the study related to (participant identification and recruitment), handling of data, anonymity, right to decline and withdraw from the study at any time, as well as contact details for additional information, questions and/or concerns. Informed consent to collect data from each participant was acquired by selecting "*I consent to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet*". Consenting participants proceeded to complete a 32-item, online questionnaire. Participants were given the freedom to complete the

questionnaire at their own pace and time. The platform used to build the questionnaire, Qualtrics, has a set period and allows the respondent to return and complete it at a later stage, however, should a participant leave the questionnaire open a period longer than one week, Qualtrics will mark the questionnaire as incomplete.

Demographic questions were asked first to help ease the participants into the questionnaire, followed by questions related to the constructs of the study.

The target participants for this study were individuals in New Zealand, specifically employees who prior to the COVID-19 pandemic had a traditional working arrangement (i.e., worked in an office, fully based at the organisation location, with set working hours), and while the questionnaire was in the field, had the ability to work flexibly (i.e., located remotely and/or with flexible hours). The number of participants required for this study was 200 – this decision was based off previous Master's thesis studies, quantitative studies utilising survey methods. These studies were validated and reliable, with the number of participants ranging from 116 to 187, and therefore provided a solid foundation on which to decide how many participants were required for the current study (Fugard & Potts, 2015).

Once the participants completed the questionnaire, they were thanked for their support and provided with contact details for additional information and/or concerns. A handful of participants got in contact via email and Facebook Messenger to receive a copy of the final report.

## Research Quality

### Validity and Reliability

In a quantitative study, reliability is defined as the degree to which the scores of the measurement tool are free from random error (Mohajan, 2017). It exists as a measure of internal consistency; it determines whether the set of variables will consistently load on the same factor and identifies if the statements for each construct are understood in the same way by the different participants. Cronbach's alpha is one measure of reliability; it measures the extent to which item responses correlate with each other (Vaske et al., 2017). Validity refers to an accurate representation of data, as well as generalisability and transferability of results to another context (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The two types of validity that will be assessed are convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity refers to the extent that an item loads on to its original construct. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) can

be used to measure convergent validity; it measures the average percentage of variation explained by the measuring items for a latent variable (Farrell, 2010) Discriminant validity identifies whether the latent variables are different from each other, that is, they each measure a unique construct. It can be measured by examining the correlations among the latent variables with the square roots of their respective AVEs. Validity shows the interconnection between what is intended to measure (conceptual definition) and what was measured (Neuendorf, 2002)

In Tanpipat et al. (2021), reliability and validity were confirmed by Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) along with Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient to analyse multi-item measures. CFA confirmed the adequate convergent validity and discriminant validity of the reflective research model. CFA was used to validate the research model of reflective constructs by assessing the convergent validity and discriminant validity. The factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and AVE values were analysed to verify convergent validity, the discriminant validity was assessed by using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio approach. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient measured how strongly correlated each item was with the other items in the scale and therefore showed consistency. Testing for reliability and validity completed in the study completed in Thai (Tanpipat et al., 2021) allowed researchers to obtain similar findings if the study is replicated at a later date.

To ensure retention of the existing reliability and validity of the current study, scales were used in their entirety, with an exception to one construct, as modified items in multi-item scales reduces reliability and validity tested by the original researchers (Tanpipat et al., 2021). The Mental Wellbeing construct was adapted from two studies completed in New Zealand: Workplace Wellness Report, BusinessNZ & Southern Cross Healthcare Society (2021) and Remote Working during COVID-19 Report (O'Kane et al., 2020), unlike the other constructs of the study which were adapted from a study completed in Thailand (Tanpipat et al., 2021). Therefore, the Mental Wellbeing construct does not have reliability and validity of scales confirmed, however this will be tested in the current study and further discussed in the Research Findings chapter.

The population may present a limitation due to the boundaries put on the participant recruitment – participants were required to have a traditional working arrangement prior to COVID-19 (i.e., worked in an office, fully based at the organisation location, with set working hours), and at the time of participating in the study had the ability to work flexibly (i.e., located remotely and/or with flexible hours). Circulation of my survey relied heavily on my network which can be considered unreliable and adds another limitation to the population due to the

geographical location where the study was circulated and shared amongst others. In order to gain further geographical reach, I was able to get in contact with the Manawatu Business Chambers. The Business Chambers shared my survey link via the chambers mailing list to reach a wider audience. Contact was also made with the Auckland and Wellington Business Chambers, unfortunately, these Business Chambers were unable to share the survey link amongst their member communications. Therefore, this study may be more representative of Auckland versus the rest of the country.

## Data Analysis

Data analysis is an important stage in the research process. It entails systematically examining and interpreting data in order to identify patterns, themes, assumptions, and meanings (Lune & Berg, 2017).

The IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for analysing the survey data. The survey data was initially exported from Qualtrics into a single excel spreadsheet to be screened and assessed by visual inspection for incomplete responses, errors and outliers by means of basic quantitative data analysis. This involved checking, editing and the presentation of the survey data from the written survey.

- 222 responses were received across a four-week period.
- 46 surveys were significantly incomplete, < 7% completion rate (with only the demographic data completed and nothing beyond the demographic questions) - these surveys were removed from the data and therefore only 176 responses were included in the analysis.
- For those surveys with >67% completion rate but <100% (Pituch & Stevens, 2015) - due to the missing data (i.e., all surveys were not completed 100%) "99" was filled in the spaces where participants did not answer and it was blank before moving the data to SPSS which was used to analyse the survey data. These surveys remained in the data as the incompleteness rate would not impact the statistical analysis greatly.

Researchers Tanpipat et al. (2021) performed a range of statistical methods to validate and analyse their data. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to identify factors and items of each factor with adequate loadings and examine the internal reliability. CFA was performed on their study to confirm the hypothesis that a relationship between the observed variables and their underlying constructs exists.

The data analysis for this study consisted of a correlational and moderated regression research design. Correlation analysis was employed to analyse relationships between two variables, and to measure the strength of the linear relationship between these variables. Correlation analysis was employed to compute their association and summarise the degree to which values in two variables correspond with each other. There may be a correlation between two variables, but only through research can the direction and strength of that correlation be determined (Curtis et al., 2016). The findings from correlational data are expressed statistically and can be explained in three ways: positive correlation, negative correlation, and no correlation. A positive correlation is a relationship that exists between two variables that increases or decreases at the same time. A negative correlation between variables occurs when an increase in one variable results in a decrease in another and vice versa. When a change in one variable does not result in a change in the other, the variables are said to be uncorrelated (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). Correlation coefficients are statistical values that are commonly used to report the findings of correlational studies. This value will range between +1 and -1, with a value near +1 indicating a strong positive relationship and a value near -1 indicating a strong negative correlation. A value near 0 indicates that the variables are connected (Fisher & Fethney, 2016).

Following this, the moderated multiple regression strategy was conducted. The moderation multiple regression tests look for a statistically significant interaction between a moderator and another variable in predicting the values of the third variable by using ordinary least squares regression (Stone & Hollenbeck, 1989; Zedeck, 1971). Differences in the slopes of the Y on X regression coefficients at different levels of the moderator variable, M, indicate the intensity or degree of a relationship. Moderator variables are significant to research as they provide a more complete explanation of the precise circumstances under which an observed correlation between two variables exists and whether this association is consistent across different scenarios (Fritz & Arthur, 2017).

### Ethical Considerations

A Review of Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants guidelines was used as a starting point for the discussions with the research supervisors. Potential ethical issues and mitigation were identified by the researcher and reviewed. A Human Ethics Application Risk Assessment Form for the proposed research was completed and approved by the human ethics committee of Massey University as low risk (Appendix 1).

Ethics considerations that were addressed during the conduct of the research are included: enabling informed consent by providing an information sheet and consent form detailing the research intent, who the study related to (participant identification and recruitment), handling of data, anonymity, right to decline and withdraw from the study at any time, as well as contact details for additional information, questions and/or concerns. Informed consent to collect data from each participant was acquired by selecting “I consent to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet” before the participant could proceed to the next step of the survey.

### Summary

This chapter described how the study was conducted. Given the main research objective of this study, it justified quantitative research as the research approach. The research paradigm, Positivism as the philosophical assumption, and epistemological considerations deemed appropriate for this study were discussed. The correlational research approach for the study was discussed, and each construct that forms part of the study was considered. The chapter elaborated on the data collection procedure, questionnaire design, participant selection criteria and invitation procedure. It then discussed in detail the chosen method of data analysis, and finally, the chapter discussed the need to consider ethical issues in relation to this study.

## Chapter 4: Research Findings

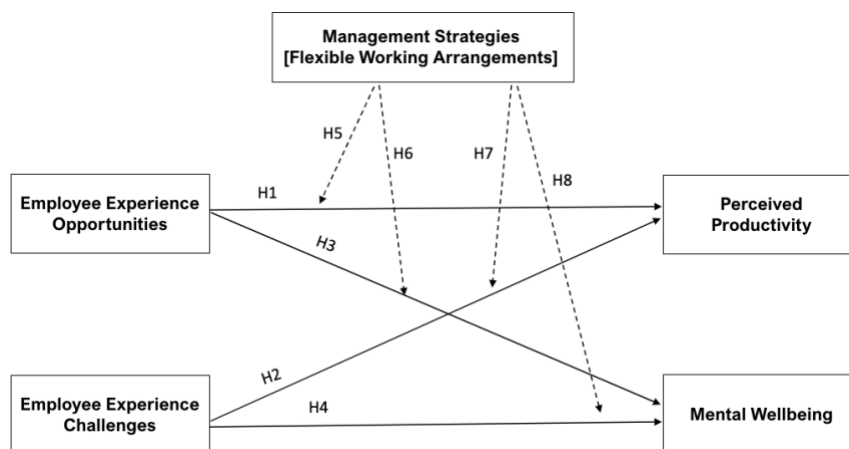
Chapter 3 presented the research methodology for this study and outlined the process for developing the research methodology. The research approach was discussed with an in-depth review of the research constructs and conceptual research model developed for the study. The data collection procedure and data analysis procedure were also presented. This chapter will go into further detail and present the findings of the study, describing the data collection results and the statistical methods used to analyse the data.

The purpose of the quantitative correlational research study was to determine if a relationship (i.e., correlation) exists between the independent, dependent and moderator variables, without seeking to establish a causal connection. The research objective is to examine the impact of FWAs, as a management strategy, moderating the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing. From the research objective, hypotheses were proposed to examine the relationships between the two independent variables, Employee Experience Opportunities (EEOPP) and Employee Experience Challenges (EECHALL), and the two dependent variables, Perceived Productivity (PP) and Mental Wellbeing (MW), and examine the moderating relationship of FWAs, as a management strategy (MS), on the independent and dependent variables. These hypotheses were discussed in detail in Chapter 3 and how they relate to the different constructs of the conceptual research model (Figure 2). Further to the conceptual research model developed in Chapter 3, and based on the hypothesized relationships, a final conceptual research model was developed to clearly show all the research constructs and hypothesized relationships between the variables of this study (Figure 3).

The study investigated the following hypotheses – this chapter will discuss the research findings in relation to the hypotheses:

- H1: EEOPP positively impacts PP
- H2: EECHALL negatively impacts PP
- H3: EEOPP positively impacts MW
- H4: EECHALL negatively impacts MW
- H5: MS has a more positive impact on the relationship between EEOPP and PP
- H6: MS has a less negative impact on the relationship between EECHALL and PP
- H7: MS has a more positive impact on the relationship between EEOPP and MW
- H8: MS has a less negative impact on the relationship between EECHALL and MW

**Figure 3** Hypothesized Conceptual Research Model



## Demographics

The goal for using demographics in the survey was to provide an understanding of the sample under study and offer more perspectives, to help ease the participants into the survey, and to prevent responses by non-qualified participants (if participants had not read the participant identification and recruitment detailing at the start of the survey). There were three questions under the demographic section that asked participants about their current working arrangement – the questions asked whether their organisation had a formal flexible working arrangement in place and asked the participants to specify their current working arrangement focusing on their hours of work, and then focusing on the location of work – if participants did not have a FWA in place, these questions would indicate to the participants the direction of the survey and they could therefore leave the survey.

The total responses received were 222, 46 (21%) of those responses were significantly incomplete with the final sample size coming to 176, for a total response completion rate of 79%. There were fewer male respondents (30%) than female respondents (70%). In terms of age group, the largest group of respondents were between the ages of 26 – 40 years old (49%), with the second highest age group being 41 – 55 years old (36%). A majority of the respondents worked in the Finance and Insurance industry (48%), and 86% of respondents resided in the Auckland region. The population reported on in the study is representative of this sample.

In terms of respondents working flexibly in their organisation, 82% of respondents advised they had a formal flexible working arrangement in their organisation, 14% of respondents did not and 2% of respondents did not know/it was unknown to them whether their organisation had a formal FWA in place. The location where respondents mostly work was split fairly evenly between mostly working from their organisation's office, 51%, and mostly working away from their organisation's office, 49%.

## Data Collection

The research study involved examining the impact of FWAs, as a management strategy, moderating the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing.

The conceptual model developed for this research (Figure 3) incorporates several variables that have hypothesised relationships with each other. Some of the relationships are influenced by a moderating variable. Moderators and mediators are variables that provide insight on the how, why, or when of an outcome or occurrence, altering the relationship between a predictor and criterion variables. Moderators are qualitative or quantitative variables that influence the strength and/or direction of the relationship between an independent variable (predictor variable) and a dependent variable (criterion or outcome variable), according to Baron and Kenny (1986). The moderator interacts with the independent variable, making its relationship with the dependent variable stronger or weaker. In other words, a moderator variable can influence the overall direction of the correlation between predictor and outcome variables by increasing or decreasing the strength of the relationship. According to Cohen et al. (2013) the level or degree of the moderator variable determines how strongly the independent variable and dependent variable are related. Moderators can be identified when the causal influence of an independent variable on the dependent variable changes as a result of a moderator variable taking on a specific value. The moderated regression strategy will be used in the current study. The moderated multiple regression strategy tests look for a statistically significant interaction between a moderator and another variable in predicting the values of the third variable by using ordinary least squares regression (Stone-Romero & Anderson, 1994) (refer to Figure 1).

## Reliability and Validity

Cronbach's alpha was used to compute the reliability of each of the constructs to measure. Alpha measures their respective internal consistency, the extent to which all items measure the same thing (latent variable). The reliability coefficients for all the research constructs were above 0.5; the lowest being 0.754 (EECHALL) and the highest being 0.915 (PP). All the alpha coefficients suggest very good internal consistency for each scale, except for the Work Demand (WD) construct.

As discussed in Chapter 3 of the research study, initially the research question consisted of a WD construct as the independent variable. However, upon re-evaluation of the overall research objective of the study, and defining what the research study aims to explore, the WD construct did not contribute to the research objective, and therefore the WD construct was removed from the research study. In Chapter 3 potential limitations associated with the research design, questionnaire development, data collection and interpretation of results from respondents were discussed – while testing the reliability and internal consistency of the WD construct (the initial independent variable), limitations were encountered. The construct was measured unreliable and not statistically significant, which therefore meant the data was unusable, confirming that the decision to re-evaluate the research objective was the right decision.

Employee experiences, expressed as opportunities and challenges, are the independent variables in the research study. This is shown in the conceptual research model (Figure 3). The employee experience constructs tested reliable. As mentioned above, the employee experience construct consists of two variables, EEOPP and EECHALL. Measuring both EEOPP and EECHALL as one construct measured unreliable and not statistically significant. Therefore, the employee experiences construct was separated and tested for reliability and internal consistency as two independent constructs: EEOPP and EECHALL. Both constructs tested reliable with a strong Cronbach Alpha of 0.791 and 0.754 respectively.

The reliability tests of all variables in the research study are shown in Appendix 4.

**Table 1** Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Internal Consistency for Study Variables

Constructs	R	R Square	F	Sig.	Standard Coefficients Beta
EEOPP > PP	0.610	0.372	100.541	<.001	0.610
EECHALL > PP	0.515	0.256	61.399	<.001	-0.515
EEOPP > MW	0.138	0.019	3.224	0.074	0.138
EECHALL > MW	0.077	0.006	0.987	0.322	-0.077
EEOPP > MS	0.015	0.000	0.036	0.850	-0.015
EECHALL > MS	0.040	0.002	0.275	0.601	-0.040
PP > MS	0.195	0.038	6.907	0.009	0.195
MW > MS	0.558	0.311	75.552	<.001	0.558

Statistical significance (p-value) for the study was defined as 0.05 (5%). For the test to be highly significant, we use a p-value of 0.01 (1%). The p-value for the test will need to be less than 0.05 to be significant at the 5% level. In interpreting participant responses, each impact was evaluated as an ordinal variable (Pituch & Stevens, 2015)..

### Work Demand

As discussed, the WD construct tested unreliable and therefore the data was unusable, however, to contextualise the study, descriptive statistics will be used to summarise and describe the characteristics of the data obtained from the WD questions which are observational rather than statistically viable but may point to future areas of research.

Respondents were asked two questions under the WD construct – for both questions, respondents were asked to think about their WD and work autonomy, and how this has changed with a FWA versus when they had a traditional working arrangement in place.

- *How has your work demand changed since being able to work flexibly?*

64% of respondents advised their WD has remained the same, whereas 21% advised their WD has somewhat increased and 10% advised their WD has significantly increased.

- *How has your work autonomy been impacted since being able to work flexibly?  
(Autonomy in the workplace is the freedom you (as the employee) have for making decisions and fulfilling certain work objectives/goals)*

41% of respondents advised their work autonomy has remained the same, whereas 38% advised their work is somewhat more autonomous and 19% advised their work is significantly more autonomous.

### **Employee Experiences and Perceived Productivity**

EEOPP has a positive moderate correlation with PP ( $r=0.610$ ), results of regression indicated both variables explained 37% of the variance ( $R^2=0.372$ ). An analysis of variance showed a strong statistically significant relationship ( $F=100.54$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Std. Coefficients Beta ( $0.610$ ) indicated a strong positive relationship.

EECHALL has a positive moderate correlation with PP ( $r=0.515$ ), results of regression indicated both variables explained 26% of the variance ( $R^2=0.265$ ). An analysis of variance showed a statistically significant relationship ( $F=61.399$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Std. Coefficients Beta ( $-0.525$ ) indicated a strong negative relationship.

### **Employee Experiences and Mental Wellbeing**

EEOPP has a weak positive degree of correlation with MW ( $r=0.138$ ), results of regression indicated both variables explained 0% of the variance ( $R^2=0.019$ ), showing there is a very weak relationship between both variables. An analysis of variance showed a statistically significant relationship F – ratio ( $F=3.224$ ) but a statistically insignificant relationship of the regression model ( $p=0.74$ ). Std. Coefficients Beta ( $0.138$ ) indicated a weak positive relationship.

EECHALL has a weak positive degree of correlation with MW ( $r=0.077$ ), results of regression indicated both variables explained 0% of the variance ( $R^2=0.006$ ), showing there is a very weak relationship between both variables. An analysis of variance showed a statistically insignificant relationship ( $F=0.987$ ,  $p=0.322$ ). Std. Coefficients Beta ( $-0.077$ ) indicated a weak negative relationship.

### **Employee Experiences and Management Strategy**

EEOPP has a weak positive degree of correlation with MS ( $r=0.015$ ), results of regression indicated both variables explained 0% of the variance ( $R^2=0.000$ ), showing there is a very weak relationship between both variables. An analysis of variance showed a statistically insignificant relationship ( $F=0.036$ ,  $p=0.850$ ). Std. Coefficients Beta ( $-0.015$ ) indicated a weak negative relationship.

EECHALL has a weak positive degree of correlation with MS ( $r=0.040$ ), results of regression indicated both variables explained 0% of the variance ( $R^2=0.002$ ), showing there is a very weak relationship between both variables. An analysis of variance showed a statistically insignificant relationship ( $F=0.275$ ,  $p=0.601$ ). Std. Coefficients Beta ( $-0.040$ ) indicated a weak negative relationship.

### EEOPP and PP, moderated by MS

The independent variables (EEOPP and MS) have a positive moderate degree of correlation with the dependent variable (PP) ( $r=.645$ ), results of regression indicated all variables explained 41% of the variance ( $R^2=.416$ ). An analysis of variance showed a statistically significant relationship ( $F=60.28$ ,  $p<.001$ ). There is a strong relationship between EEOPP and MS, and the relationship between EEOPP and PP is significant.

MS, as the moderator, has a P-value of  $<.001$ , since the P-value is lower than 0.05, we can consider that the moderator variable has an effect on the relationship between the independent variable, EEOPP, and the dependent variable, PP.

**Table 2** Results of moderation regression analysis on variables EEOPP, MS and PP

Constructs	R	R Square	F	Sig.
EEOPP > MS > PP	0.645	0.416	60.288	<.001

Coefficients	Unstandardized		Standard	t	Sig.
	B	Std.Error	Coefficients		
(Constant)	-0.257	0.477		-0.538	0.591
EEOPP	0.751	0.072	0.613	10.425	<.001
MS	0.187	0.052	0.212	3.600	<.001
Dependent Variable: PP					

### EECHALL and PP, moderated by MS

The independent variables (EECHALL and MS) have a positive moderate degree of correlation with the dependent variable (PP) ( $r=.546$ ), results of regression indicated all variables explained 29% of the variance ( $R^2=.299$ ). An analysis of variance showed a statistically significant relationship ( $F=35.95$ ,  $p<.001$ ). There is a strong relationship between EECHALL and MS, and the relationship between EECHALL and PP is significant.

MS, as the moderator, has a P-value of  $.005$ , since the P-value is lower than 0.05, we can consider that the moderator variable has an effect on the relationship between the independent variable, EECHALL, and the dependent variable, PP.

**Table 3** Results of moderation regression analysis on variables EECHALL, MS and PP

Constructs	R	R Square	F	Sig.
EECHALL > MS > PP	0.546	0.299	35.958	<.001

Coefficients	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standard Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std.Error	Beta		
(Constant)	6.043	0.403		15.004	<.001
EECHALL	-0.493	0.063	-0.508	-7.875	<.001
MS	0.161	0.057	0.182	2.827	0.005

Dependent Variable: PP

**EEOPP and MW, moderated by MS**

The independent variables, EEOPP and MS, have a positive moderate degree of correlation with the dependent variable, MW, ( $r=.579$ ), results of regression indicated all variables explained 33% of the variance ( $R^2=.335$ ). An analysis of variance showed a statistically significant relationship ( $F=41.762$ ,  $p<.001$ ). There is a strong relationship between EEOPP and MS, and the relationship between EEOPP and MW is significant.

MS, as the moderator, has a P-value of  $<.001$ , since the P-value is lower than 0.05, we can consider that the moderator variable has an effect on the relationship between the independent variable, EEOPP and the dependent variable, MW.

**Table 4** Results of moderation regression analysis on variables EEOPP, MS and MW

Constructs	R	R Square	F	Sig.
EEOPP > MS > MW	0.579	0.335	41.762	<.001

Coefficients	Unstandardized		Standard	t	Sig.
	B	Std.Error	Coefficients		
(Constant)	0.992	0.499		1.990	0.048
EEOPP	0.181	0.075	0.153	2.408	0.017
MS	0.475	0.054	0.562	8.877	<.001

Dependent Variable: MW

**EECHALL and MW, moderated by MS**

The independent variables, EECHALL and MS, have a positive moderate degree of correlation with the dependent variable, MW ( $r=.561$ ), results of regression indicated all variables explained 31% of the variance ( $R^2=.314$ ). An analysis of variance showed a statistically

significant relationship ( $F=38.074$ ,  $p<.001$ ). There is a strong relationship between EECHALL and MS, and the relationship between EECHALL and MW is significant.

MS, as the moderator, has a P-value of  $<.001$ , since the P-value is lower than 0.05, we can consider that the moderator variable has an effect on the relationship between the independent variable, EECHALL and the dependent variable, MW.

**Table 5** Results of moderation regression analysis on variables EECHALL, MS and MW

Constructs	R	R Square	F	Sig.
EECHALL > MS > MW	0.561	0.314	38.074	<.001

Coefficients	Unstandardized		Standard	t	Sig.
	B	Std.Error	Coefficients		
(Constant)	2.216	0.383		5.783	<.001
EECHALL	-0.050	0.059	-0.550	-0.850	0.397
MS	0.470	0.054	0.556	8.644	<.001

Dependent Variable: MW

The research findings indicated that there was a statistically significant relationship between EEOPP and PP; and between EECHALL and PP. When MS as the moderator variable was added, there was an even stronger statistically significant relationship between EEOPP and PP; and between EECHALL and PP.

The research findings indicated that there was not a statistically significant relationship between EEOPP and MW; and between EECHALL and MW. However, when MS as the moderator was added, there was a statistically significant relationship between EEOPP and MW; and between EECHALL and MW.

### Summary

This chapter provided a detailed analysis of the findings of the study, the data collection results, and the statistical methods used to analyse the data. The research findings indicate that EEOPP positively impacts PP, and EECHALL negatively impacts PP. When MS, was added as a moderator the relationships were impacted: EEOPP, had a more positive impact on PP, and EECHALL, had a less negative impact on PP. The research findings showed that there was not a statistically significant relationship between EEOPP and MW; and EECHALL and MW. However, when MS was added as a moderator, the relationships were statistically

significant: EEOPP, had a positive impact on MW; and EECHALL, had a less negative impact on MW.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter 4 presented the research findings for this study and described the data collection results and statistical methods used to analyse the data. This chapter will discuss and summarise the findings and relate them to the literature and theoretical frameworks that guide this study.

The research objective of the study was to examine the impact of FWAs, as a management strategy, moderating the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing.

### Research Model and Results

Based on the literature, a conceptual research model was developed (refer to Figure 3). The conceptual research model included variables important in testing and predicting the hypothesised relationships – one moderating variable, two independent variables and two dependent variables.

Data were collected from an online survey. The target population for this study was employees working in an organisation with FWAs in New Zealand. Data from 176 participants were examined through correlational and moderation regression analysis.

The study investigated the following hypotheses:

- H1: EEOPP positively impacts PP
- H2: EECHALL negatively impacts PP
- H3: EEOPP positively impacts MW
- H4: EECHALL negatively impacts MW
- H5: MS has a more positive impact on the relationship between EEOPP and PP
- H6: MS has a less negative impact on the relationship between EECHALL and PP
- H7: MS has a more positive impact on the relationship between EEOPP and MW
- H8: MS has a less negative impact on the relationship between EECHALL and MW

The data tables in Chapter 4 summarised the results of all hypothesised relationships by correlational and moderated regression analysis. As discussed, the results partially support my research model in that six of the eight hypothesised relationships are supported and tested

statistically significant. The following sections expand on these findings in terms of theoretical and practical implications. The discussion focuses on considering the findings in relation to the literature review and in response to the overall research question: What is the impact of FWAs, as a management strategy, moderating the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing?

### **Perceived Productivity**

The hypotheses to predict the relationship between the variables of employee experiences and employee perceived productivity were both confirmed:

- H1: EEOPP positively impacts PP
- H2: EECHALL negatively impacts PP

The independent variables, EEOPP and EECHALL, have a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable, PP. The results indicate that EEOPP has a strong positive relationship with PP, whereas EECHALL has a strong negative relationship with PP.

This means that when employees have opportunities in an organisation, their perceived productivity is positively impacted. Whereas when employees have challenges in an organisation, their perceived productivity is negatively impacted.

Using the JD-R model as a theoretical framework to consider my findings, employees experiencing opportunities in an organisation may be due to the resources provided by the organisation, which positively impacts their perceived productivity. The JD-R model emphasises the importance of organisational resources in ensuring employees feel supported and positive about their work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Positive experiences can lead to positive work outcomes, contributing to improved productivity. When employees have adequate resources, they perceive the resources as opportunities for growth and knowledge in their respective roles, resulting in positive perceived productivity.

Whereas employees may face challenges in their organisations due to job demands that negatively impact their perceived productivity. The JD-R model highlights that when employees are experiencing high job demands, they may require more support, which can result in disengagement from their roles (Demerouti et al., 2001). Achieving work-related goals without sufficient resources can lead to increased employee effort, especially in the presence of high job demands.

However, considering these findings, employees may or may not be provided with resources to help them overcome challenges they may face in their roles. Although organisations may try their best to support their employees, there may be times when limited resources are available. In such cases, employees must complete their work without these resources. It is important to note that organisations work within constrained policies and practises, with limited resources, and still need to continue to achieve organisational success.

My research suggests that if organisations cannot provide sufficient resources to support employees, especially during challenging times, which could be due to high job demands, organisations could consider using FWAs as a management strategy. This can help moderate the relationship between employee experiences, whether they are opportunities or challenges, and their perceived productivity.

This can be seen in the research findings when the moderator variable, MS, was used to analyse the moderator's impact on the relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

The hypotheses to predict the relationships between the variables of employee experiences and employee perceived productivity, moderated by MS, were both confirmed:

- H5: MS has a more positive impact on the relationship between EEOPP and PP
- H6: MS has a less negative impact on the relationship between EECHALL and PP

With the moderator variable, MS, the results show that EEOPP has a stronger positive relationship with PP (H5), indicating that the moderator variable significantly impacts the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Similarly, with the moderator variable, MS, the results show that EECHALL has a less negative relationship with PP (H6). This means that when employees have opportunities in an organisation, and the organisation utilises FWAs as a management strategy, employees perceived productivity will be more positive. Whereas when employees have challenges in an organisation and the organisation utilises FWAs as a management strategy, employees perceived productivity will be less negative.

Using MCT as a theoretical framework (Herath, 2007) to consider my findings, management strategies can be used as a tool to support the interactions between a manager and an employee, which in turn influences employees' achievement of goals and objectives (Anthony, 1988). Therefore, using FWA as a management strategy can support the interactions between

a manager and an employee, which can moderate high job demands. Providing employees flexibility in their roles can help mitigate high job demands. When employees feel supported by their organisation and manager, this can suggest a positive employee experience, which is likely to positively impact employee perceived productivity.

This study also hypothesised the relationship between the independent variables, EEOPP and EECHALL, and the dependent variable, MW, results indicated the variables did not have a statistically significant relationship. EEOPP has a weak positive relationship with MW, and EECHALL has a weak negative relationship with MW.

The research findings from this study were not able to confirm the following hypotheses:

- H3: EEOPP positively impacts MW
- H4: EECHALL negatively impacts MW

The relationships predicted between the independent variables, EEOPP and EECHALL, and the dependent variable, MW, were not statistically significant. Given the existing literature (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001; Perrin, 2003; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) and the potential role of MCT and FWAs as support, the hypothesised relationships were considered when the moderator variable was evaluated.

## **Mental Wellbeing**

Alongside the impact of the moderator on employee experiences and perceived productivity, once the moderator variable was applied to the relationship between employee experiences and mental wellbeing, there was a statistically significant relationship.

The hypotheses to predict the relationships between employee experiences and MW, moderated by MS, were both confirmed:

- H7: MS has a more positive impact on the relationship between EEOPP and MW
- H8: MS has a less negative impact on the relationship between EECHALL and MW

With the moderator variable, MS, the results show that EEOPP has a statistically significant positive relationship with MW (H7), indicating that the moderator variable impacts the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Similarly, with the moderator variable, MS, the results show that EECHALL has a statistically significant negative relationship with MW (H8).

This means that when employees experience opportunities in an organisation and the organisation utilises FWAs as a management strategy, there is a statistically significant positive relationship with their mental wellbeing. Whereas when employees experience challenges in an organisation and the organisation utilises FWAs as a management strategy, employees' mental wellbeing will be negative.

Using the JD-R model as a theoretical framework to consider my findings, high job demands in an organisation can cause employees to jeopardise their mental wellbeing. The JD-R model highlights that job resources can reduce the negative health effects of job demands (Demerouti et al., 2001). Job resources can foster positive organisational outcomes and allow employees to feel supported. This can reduce the negative impacts of job demands, which will positively impact employee mental wellbeing. However, as discussed above, organisations work within constrained policies and practise, with limited resources, and still require employees to fulfil their roles and responsibilities as organisations still need to achieve organisational success.

This can help moderate the relationship between employee experiences, whether they are opportunities or challenges, and their mental wellbeing.

Returning to my research question, the findings of this study provide a clear answer to the impact of FWAs, as a management strategy, moderating the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing. If organisations look at utilising FWAs, they can influence the impact of employee experiences on employees' perceived productivity and mental wellbeing. Referring to Figure 3, the hypothesised conceptual research model for this study, utilising the moderator variable can be a means to strengthen the positive relationship of H1 and make H2 less negative. The moderator variable can also make H3 and H4 statistically significant relationships. That is, once FWAs are included as a moderator, employee experiences, expressed as opportunities or challenges, can be considered to have an impact on employee mental wellbeing.

### Theoretical and Practical Implications

The JD-R model suggests that resources provided by an organisation are important factors to ensure employees feel supported. This can be extended to employees positively perceiving what the organisation provides them as opportunities to grow and become knowledgeable in their role. When employees are provided with adequate resources to fulfill their responsibilities, they feel positive about their work and have a positive impact on their

perceived productivity. When employees are not feeling supported, they are more likely to withdraw from and disengage from their roles. Employees' perceived productivity is negatively impacted when they are not provided with adequate resources to fulfill their responsibilities.

This is particularly relevant when employees are experiencing high job demands. Job demands of an organisation can cause employees to jeopardise their mental wellbeing, which can negatively impact their work life balance. The JD-R model has a health-protecting factor known as job resources that can reduce the negative health effects of job demands. Job resources play a motivational role, stimulate work engagement and foster positive organisational outcomes. When employees are supported with organisational resources, the negative impacts of job demands can be reduced, which will have a positive impact on employee mental wellbeing.

The JD-R model supports existing literature that employee experiences impact perceived productivity and mental wellbeing. The results for H1 and H2 confirm the literature, indicating a strong positive relationship between EEOPP and PP (H1) and a strong negative relationship between EECHALL and PP (H2).

The MCT outlines how management strategies can be used to support the relationship between managers and employees, which can influence the achievement of goals and overall organisational success. Organisations with high levels of employee engagement utilise a management system that provides their employees with skills, knowledge, motivation, and direction, and is of interest to the employee. Employee interests are identified as a key contributor to employee engagement and workplace productivity, which is positively impacted when organisations implement policies and practises in response to employee interests.

The research findings of this study support existing literature that when organisations proactively utilise FWAs, as a management strategy, employee experiences will be positive (expressed as opportunities) which will have a positive impact on employee perceived productivity and mental wellbeing. The results for H5 – H8 confirm the literature, indicating a more positive relationship between EEOPP and PP (H5), between EECHALL and PP (H6), a significant positive relationship between EEOPP and MW (H7), and between EECHALL and MW (H8). Indicating the moderator variable has a significant impact on the relationship between the independent and dependant variables.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study examined the impact of FWAs, as a management strategy, on the relationships between employee experiences and perceived productivity, and employee experiences and mental wellbeing. Over the past few decades, more and more organisations have been adopting FWAs (Hunter, 2019). These arrangements have undergone various changes over time, but they are becoming more prevalent as many employees are now seeking greater flexibility in their work arrangements.

Prior research provides insights into the development of FWAs, factors to be considered regarding FWAs, and how FWAs have influenced management strategies. Prior research also suggests FWAs have both positive and negative impacts on employees' productivity and mental wellbeing within an organisation. It has become necessary for organisations to understand the impact of management strategies in order to use them effectively for decision-making regarding FWAs. The research question for this study was as follows: what is the impact of FWAs as a management strategy, moderating the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing?

This research study utilised a quantitative design to examine how FWAs impact the relationship between employee experiences and their perceived productivity, and employee experiences and mental wellbeing. Data were collected from an online survey, from New Zealand employees working in an organisation with FWAs. 176 valid responses were examined through correlational and moderation regression analysis.

This study used the MCT and JD-R model to examine how FWAs impact the relationship between employee experiences, and perceived productivity, and mental wellbeing. The MCT examines the relationship between management and employees, providing insight into the factors that influence their interactions (Herath, 2007). Meanwhile, the JD-R model helps to understand how job demands and resources impact the relationship between managers and employees within an organisation (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Key findings show a statistically significant relationship between employees' experience and perceived productivity. Employee experiences, when expressed as opportunities, positively impacted perceived productivity, while when expressed as challenges, negatively impact perceived productivity. When FWAs, as a management strategy, were added as a moderator the relationships were stronger: employee experiences, expressed as opportunities, had a more positive impact on perceived productivity; and employee experiences, expressed as

challenges, had a less negative impact on perceived productivity. There was not a statistically significant relationship between employees' experience, expressed as opportunities or expressed as challenges, and mental wellbeing. However, when FWAs, as a management strategy, were added as a moderator, the relationships were statistically significant: employee experiences, expressed as opportunities, had a positive impact on mental wellbeing; and employee experiences, expressed as challenges, had a less negative impact on perceived productivity.

## Key Findings

The research findings support existing literature, that if organisations cannot provide sufficient resources to support employees, especially during challenging times, organisations could consider using FWAs as a management strategy to help moderate the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity, and employee experiences and mental wellbeing.

The MCT and JD-R model provided a lens for a deeper understanding of the research question. The MCT considers the dimensions of management control, and the impact this has on employee perceived productivity and mental wellbeing. The JD-R model, driven by job demands and resources of the organisation, provides insight to better understand the relationship between employees and management. Both frameworks demonstrate the ongoing interaction between organisations and their employees and are particularly useful in providing guidance to organisations by drawing on decades of research to identify effective strategies for the organisation.

The findings of this study provide clear answers to the impact of FWAs, as a management strategy, moderating the relationship between employee experiences and perceived productivity and mental wellbeing. If organisations look at utilising FWAs, they can influence the impact of employee experiences on employee perceived productivity and mental wellbeing.

## Limitations and Future Research

Like all research, there are limitations. The limitations of a study refer to the aspects of its logical design or methodology that can affect the interpretation of its research findings. These

limitations are important for ensuring transparency in both the research and the researchers conducting it (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019).

First, the research study was limited by methodological factors. The population for the study, N=176 with 86% residing in the Auckland region, is small and limits the generalisability of the results. As a result, it may be difficult to draw firm conclusions regarding the size of the effect and generalise beyond the population being investigated. While more difficult to achieve and more costly to deliver, longitudinal research could improve the validity of future studies.

Second, the use of a self-report questionnaire could also present limitations. The tendency for respondents to select the socially desirable response, regardless of how accurate their response is, is known as social desirability (Spector, 1987). Participants may have responded in a socially desirable manner as employees demand more flexibility in the workplace. However, the use of a self-reported questionnaire was necessary to obtain anonymity and confidentiality of respondents. By assessing participants on multiple constructs and instruments using longitudinal research, common method bias could be reduced, and hypothesis testing strengthened (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Third, there is an issue of nonresponse. How do those that did not respond (79%), differ from those who did respond (21%)? It is possible that those who worked the most hours did not have time to complete relatively lengthy surveys and thus did not respond. As a result, those with the highest workload may be underrepresented. If this is the case, any results may be understated. Employees with low levels of work-life conflict who are relatively content, on the other hand, may have chosen not to participate. If this is the case, the results may have been overstated (Sax et al., 2003).

Lastly, the limitation is that FWAs have different meanings for different employees working across different organisations. Participants may have responded to the questions with a different understanding of FWAs than that outlined in the Information sheet.

Future studies could expand their studies to other regions in New Zealand or other countries. They could also broaden the scope of the study to include all employees, not just those who had a traditional work arrangement before. Additionally, they could narrow down their focus to formal work arrangements and investigate how they affect employees' experiences in their organisations. Future research could also examine the personal and job characteristics of employees, as well as how organisations communicate and implement flexible work arrangements.

## Summary

FWAs are becoming more and more common in organisations. Research suggests FWAs allow employees to have greater control over their work schedules and how they complete their tasks and responsibilities, which assists employees in maintaining their productivity and mental wellbeing (Caesens et al., 2016). By adopting and understanding FWAs, as a management strategy, organisations can moderate the relationship between employee experiences, whether they are opportunities or challenges, and their perceived productivity and mental wellbeing.

In conclusion, this study suggests that using FWAs as a management strategy can benefit organisations and have a positive impact on their employees.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Human Ethics - Low Risk Notification Letter



Dear:

Thank you for your notification which you have assessed as Low Risk.

Your project has been recorded in our database for inclusion in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

If situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your ethical analysis, please contact a Research Ethics Administrator.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

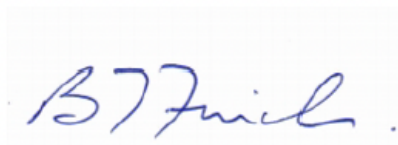
**A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:**

*"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research."*

*If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director - Ethics, telephone 06 3569099 ext 86015, email [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz)."*

Please note, if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to complete the application form again, answering "yes" to the publication question to provide more information for one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely



Dr Brian Finch Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

Research Ethics Office, Research and Enterprise  
Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, 4442, New Zealand T 06 951 6841; 06 95106840  
E [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz); [animalethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:animalethics@massey.ac.nz); [gtc@massey.ac.nz](mailto:gtc@massey.ac.nz)

## Appendix 2: Qualtrics Questionnaire



### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

#### Exploring the impact of flexible working arrangements on employees' perceived productivity and mental wellbeing

#### INFORMATION SHEET

##### Introduction

My name is Lynn Crooney, a post-graduate student at Massey University enrolled in a Master of Business Studies (MBS) degree. As part of this, I am undertaking research to understand how employees perceive their productivity and wellbeing when working for organisations that have recently implemented flexible working arrangements.



##### Participant Identification and Recruitment

This study relates specifically to New Zealand employees who;

- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic had a traditional working arrangement (i.e., worked in an office, fully based at the organisation location, with set working hours), and
- Currently have the ability to work flexibly (i.e., located remotely and/or with flexible hours).

##### What is defined as a 'flexible working arrangement' in this research?

Flexible working arrangements refer to an arrangement set out by your organisation and/or agreed with your leader where you can split your work location and hours between the office and working from home (for research purposes, working from home refers to working from your New Zealand residence, not overseas).

##### Project Procedures

Participation in this study will involve responding to an anonymous questionnaire (i.e., no identifying information of you or your company will be collected). This will be conducted via an online questionnaire platform, Qualtrics. The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

##### Data Management

Responses will be analysed by the researcher. All raw data captured will remain confidential.

understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

Please confirm your consent to undertake the questionnaire to continue. You have the right to stop the survey at any time.

Participant consent:

- I consent to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet
- I do not consent to participate in this study

#### DEMOGRAPHICS

##### What gender do you identify with?

- Male
- Female
- Gender diverse
- Prefer not to answer

Please specify which ethnicity you most closely identify with:

- European/Paheka
- Māori
- Pacific Peoples
- Asian
- Middle Eastern
- Latin American
- African
- Other Ethnicity

##### What age group are you in?

- 18-25 years old
- 26-40 years old
- 41-55 years old
- 55-60 years old

The final report will be available for participants after it has been submitted to the University. Findings may also be published in an academic journal in the future, maintaining the anonymity of all participants and confidentiality of raw data.

##### Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to complete the questionnaire. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- withdraw from the study at any time, without providing a reason
- ask any question about the study at any time during participation by emailing the researcher
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded

##### Project Contacts

You are invited to contact the researcher and/or supervisor at any time if you have any questions regarding the study:

- Researcher: Lynn Crooney (lynncrooney@gmail.com)
- Supervisor: Dr Jennifer Scott (J.Scott2@massey.ac.nz)

##### Ethical Conduct

This research has been evaluated and approved by Massey University Ethics Committee and deemed as low risk.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director (Research Ethics), email [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz).

#### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

#### Exploring the impact of flexible working arrangements on employees' perceived productivity and mental wellbeing

#### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read and understood the Information Sheet on the previous page. Any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this and I

- 60-65 years old
- >65 years old

##### What occupational sector do you work in?

- Agriculture, forestry, fishing & mining
- Business & property
- Finance and Insurance
- Education
- Manufacturing
- Electricity, gas, water & construction
- Government administration
- Wholesale, retail, accommodation cafes & restaurants
- Transport, storage & communication
- Other

Please select your region of residence:

##### At what level of your organisation do you work?

- Executive Management
- Senior Management
- Middle Management
- Senior Team Member
- Junior Team Member
- Other

Please select the current individual income bracket you fall in (in NZD):

- \$0 to \$14,000
- \$14,001 to \$48,000
- \$48,001 to \$70,000
- \$70,001 to \$180,000
- \$180,000+

Prefer not to answer

**What is your current living condition?**

- Living alone
- Living with my partner
- Living without my partner
- Living with friends or others
- Living with family without children
- Living with family with children
- Other

**What is your relationship status?**

- Single
- In a relationship cohabiting
- In a relationship living apart
- Other

**Do you have children living at home?**

- Yes - full time
- Yes - part-time (i.e., blended family, separated / divorced)
- No

**Do you have other dependants? (e.g. adults, pets, other children)**

- Yes - at my home
- Yes - away from home
- No

**Do you have a formal flexible working arrangement in your organisation?**

- Yes
- No
- Unknown

**How has your work demand changed since being able to work flexibly?**

*Work demand refers to the tasks and workload given to you.*

- Significantly increased
- Somewhat increased
- Remained the same
- Somewhat decreased
- Significantly decreased

**How has your work autonomy been impacted since being able to work flexibly?**

*Autonomy in the workplace is the freedom you (as the employee) have for making decisions and fulfilling certain work objectives/goals.*

- Significantly more autonomous
- Somewhat more autonomous
- Remained the same
- Somewhat less autonomous
- Significantly less autonomous

**MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

Please think about how your organisation has **implemented flexible working** arrangements and **supported you** throughout this change.

Please rate how strongly you agree with the implementation of flexible working arrangements in your organisation:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree
My organisation has implemented a flexible working arrangement in consultation with employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My organisation has provided training on technical requirements for flexible working	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Please specify your current working arrangement, focusing on your location of work:**

- I mostly work from my organisation's office
- I mostly work away from my organisation's office

**Please specify your current working arrangement, focusing on your hours of work:**

*(select all that apply)*

- I mostly choose the number of hours I work each day
- I mostly choose my start and end time each day
- I mostly work during traditional office hours
- My hours of working change each week depending on work demands
- My hours of working change each week depending on non-work related demands

**Please specify whether you work full time, part-time or contract / seasonal:**

- Full time (30-40+ hours a week)
- Part time (30 hours or less)
- Contracted / Seasonal

**How long have you worked in your organisation?**

- <1 year
- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- 5-10 years
- >10 years

**WORK DEMAND**

For the following questions, please think about how your **work demand** and **work autonomy** has changed with a flexible working arrangement versus when you had a traditional working arrangement in place.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree
My organisation continues to explore emerging flexible working arrangements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My organisation has focused on alternative flexible work arrangements and emerging support technologies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My senior executives influence the organisational dynamics of flexible working	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My organisation supports employees who face challenges when working flexibly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My organisation effectively aligns organisational goals and flexible working arrangements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**PERCEIVED PRODUCTIVITY**

The following questions focus on **productivity, collaboration and communication**. Please think about how these areas have changed / been influenced with a flexible working arrangement in place.

Please rate how your level of productivity in the following areas has changed since you have been able to work flexibly:

	Much worse	Moderately worse	Slightly worse	About the same	Slightly better	Moderately better
My overall concentration towards work tasks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My task management and delivery performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My work-life balance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My overall productivity towards work tasks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please rate how your level of collaboration in the following areas has changed since you've been able to work flexibly:

	Much worse	Moderately worse	Slightly worse	About the same	Slightly better	Moderately better
My discussion and brainstorming skills with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My collaborative skills in formal meetings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Much worse	Moderately worse	Slightly worse	About the same	Slightly better	Moderately better
My presentation skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My overall satisfaction with collaborative activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please rate how your level of communication in the following areas has changed since you've been able to work flexibly:

	Much worse	Moderately worse	Slightly worse	About the same	Slightly better	Moderately better
My ability to deliver information through online communication channels	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My ability to receive, understand and execute tasks (manage workflow)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My ability to manage my work schedule	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My ability to engage and communicate with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### MENTAL WELLBEING

#### How are you feeling?

The next few questions are about your mental wellbeing.

We are interested in how your mental wellbeing has been impacted by the implementation of a flexible working arrangement in your organisation.

Like all the questions in the survey, your answers are completely confidential and anonymous and will be used for research purposes only.

#### What is defined as 'flexible working arrangements' in this research?

Flexible working arrangements refer to an arrangement set out by your organisation and/or agreed with your leader where you can split your work location hours between the office and working from home (for research purposes, working from home refers to working from your New Zealand residence, not overseas).

### DISTRACTIONS

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable
working flexibly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please rate how strongly you agree the following areas have been opportunities for you when working flexibly:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable
Greater flexibility as to how I manage my working day	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reduced costs of going into work and commuting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Get more work done	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reduced carbon footprint	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Less stress than working in the office	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helps with managing childcare responsibilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have my own physical workplace / work desk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online meetings are less stressful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are no advantages to working flexibly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### WELLBEING SUPPORT

The following questions focus on the wellbeing support your organisation has in place to identify and support you while working flexibly.

The following questions look into how you feel about flexible working, the challenges it has presented, and the opportunities.

How have you found a flexible working arrangement? (i.e. the ease of flexible working versus traditional working arrangements)

- Much better
- Somewhat better
- About the same
- Somewhat worse
- Much worse

Please rate how strongly you agree the following areas have been challenging for you when working flexibly:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable
Not being able to switch off from work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collaboration and communication with co-workers is harder	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your physical workplace	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staying motivated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Too many distractions (i.e. housework, interruptions from others, outside noises)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Loneliness / isolation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Internet connectivity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Childcare	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am not facing any challenges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please rate how strongly you agree your organisation has the following practices in place to identify mental wellbeing while working flexibly:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Staff surveys	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training for managers to identify and manage mental wellbeing concerns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Risk assessments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stress / fatigue / mental wellbeing audits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wellbeing check ins	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
None	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please rate how strongly you agree your organisation has the following practices in place to support mental wellbeing while working flexibly:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mental wellbeing seminars	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mindfulness initiatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Diversity and inclusion policies and practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support for parents juggling working from home & caring for children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mentor / buddy system	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Subsidised health insurance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discounted benefits from corporate partnerships (i.e. gym, flight tickets, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Special leave	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
None	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The following questions look at your **general stress** since being able to work flexibly compared to when you had a traditional working arrangement in place.

**How are your general stress levels since being able to work flexibly?**

- Much better
- Somewhat better
- About the same
- Somewhat worse
- Much worse

**What have you found to be the causes of work-related and non-work-related stress for you when working flexibly?** (select all that apply)

- Long working hours (i.e. not being able to switch off from work)
- Blurring home and work life balance
- Changes within the organisation
- Lack of training / resources
- System stability
- Lack of career progression
- Relationships between co-workers
- Caring for a family member or other dependents while working from home
- Personal illness/health
- Financial concerns
- Relationships outside of work (i.e. partner, family)
- Other

**HEALTH**

The following questions focus on your **mental health** since being able to work flexibly compared to when you had a traditional working arrangement in place.

**What have you found to be the causes of absence while working flexibly?** (select all that apply)

- Non-work related illness / injury
- Caring for a family member or other dependant due to illness / injury
- Mental wellbeing / stress
- Caring for a family member or other dependent due to a breakdown in support arrangement
- Personal problem (e.g., drinking / drug / relationship problems)
- Attending / waiting for medical appointments
- Work-related illness / injury
- Other

**What have you found to be the main approach taken when sick while working flexibly?**

- I mostly take sick leave and do not work
- I mostly work and only take sick leave if I am physically unable to work
- I mostly work half day and take sick leave for the other half
- I have the ability / flexibility to work when I can and rest when I need to
- I do not have the ability / flexibility to work when I can and rest when I need to

**How is your mental health since being able to work flexibly compared to when you had a traditional working arrangement in place?**

- Much better
- Somewhat better
- About the same
- Somewhat worse
- Much worse

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## Appendix 3: Social Media Posts

**Lynn Crooney** · You

Strategic Research Analyst at AIA NZ

now · 🌐

⋮

The world, as we knew it, has changed irrevocably in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The way we live, work and socialise transformed by the rapid innovation and adoption of digital tools and technology, enabling us to connect and continue whenever and wherever we are.

As a passionate researcher, I have observed this with interest, eager to understand 'what this means for the future of work'? I've subsequently chosen to focus my Masters research on understanding the impact of flexible working on employees' perceived productivity and mental wellbeing.

If you have 15 minutes to share your experience, I would love to hear:

- How flexible working has benefitted you?
- Your productivity?
- Work-life balance?
- What challenges have you faced?
- How has your organisation supported you and your wellbeing through the transition(s)?

Please click this link to start the survey: <https://lnkd.in/gPpryV26>

Responses are completely anonymous, so whilst I won't know who you are, you will know you've not only helped me but also other Kiwis navigating this new world.

Thanks in advance for your support!

**Exploring the impact of flexible working arrangements on employees' perceived productivity and mental wellbeing**

massey.au1.qualtrics.com · 1 min read

This research is being undertaken to understand how employees perceive their producti...

👍 Like
💬 Comment
➦ Share
✉️ Send

#### Appendix 4: Reliability Tests

Variables	Reliability Tests		
	No. items	Variables	Reliability
MS	7	23 - 29	0.878
PP	12	30 - 41	0.915
PP (Productivity)	4	30 - 33	0.852
PP (Collaboration)	4	34 - 37	0.896
PP (Communication)	4	38 - 41	0.823
EEOPP & EECHALL (without 'none')	16	43 - 59	0.41
EECHALL (without 'none')	8	43 - 50	0.754
EEOPP (without 'none')	8	52 - 59	0.791
WD	2	21 - 22	-0.162
MW (Identity) (without 'none')	5	61 - 65	0.891
MW (Support) (without 'none')	9	67 - 76	0.789