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**RELATIONSHIP AND IMPACT OF FLEXIBLE WORKPLACE TO
AN EMPLOYEE'S PERFORMANCE BASED ON
MANUFACTURING & IT COMPANY**

Master's Thesis

Programme International Business Administration

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the thesis independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors have been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this master's thesis is to find out the relationship and the effects of a flexible working place to an employee's performance in the attainment of his tasks based on a manufacturing company based in Estonia and an IT company located in Canada. Due to the increase in workload and less happy employees, this research has a goal in highlighting the impact of flexible work arrangements on an employee's productivity. In order to reach this, the author of this thesis has put down the following research questions. (1) What do employees look for in a flexible working environment? (2) What challenges and difficulties do employees face with a non-flexible workplace? (3) In future how an employee's performance in workplace can be improved? The main question that was researched during this study was to find out the factors that influence employee's performance with flexible working environment conditions.

The companies that are focused for this thesis is a global IT based company "Teleperformance" and a manufacturing company "Éolane Tallinn AS." The author conducted both a qualitative and a quantitative research for this thesis. Qualitative research was done through interviews of employees and managers whereas quantitative research was done through a survey.

The result of this thesis came out to be quite unique and positive. The output showed that people prefer working in a flexible environment and despite having challenges and problems they were motivated and dedicated to work if they were offered the flexibility they desired. There were some main points to be noted and majority agreed of having flexible workplace for better performance. The suggestions given to them was to add adaptable adjustments in their job contracts which if they think is important and suitable for a candidate and provide more stress free environment for employees to work.

Keywords: work satisfaction, flexibility, employee's performance, working environment, relationship

INTRODUCTION

Today in this fast moving world with increasingly new technologies every day and a rise in business competition, it has all led to a change in working systems and procedures. Many businesses have created unique and innovative strategies to keep up with the competitive market and steer their manpower to a higher degree of productivity. People nowadays are looking for jobs that they are satisfied with. They want their place of work to be comfortable and flexible and the freedom given to them there, aims in producing quality work. The problem is that the employees are not being given the amount of flexibility they require at workplaces to give their best outcome.

According to an entrepreneur, Job satisfaction is a very fundamental part of an employee's working life and inspiration to remain honest and faithful to an organization. As the time is running, the world has shifted from being product and manufacturing oriented to being focused on service. With the vast growth of monopolies and system economies, countries and different organizations have understood that they have to concentrate on human resources of their firms and organizations. Whether or not the company is big or small but to stand upright in the market, they have to start by keeping their employees and workers happy (Zarin, 2018).

With an increase in technological advancements and developments, employees are being affected due to the rise in work load to compete with the competitors market and produce positive results for their firm. The amount of load on an employee is getting bigger and bigger day by day with the rapid enlargement of companies and their goals to accomplish. According to a survey in 2016, it shows that workload of employees led to family conflicts at home and poor performance at work. (Ilies *et al.* 2016). Flexible working arrangements gives an ease to employees to help balance their work and family needs. These arrangements are collaboration between employers and employees to provide different options as to when, where and how they work (Stroop, Yoon 2016).

Demands for flexible work arrangements have become quite common, with the main aim of helping employees perform more effectively and efficiently in both their personal and professional lives (Ciara *et al.* 2020). A lot of research has been done on flexible scheduling given to employees and it shows a big reduction in employees being absent from their work (Dalton, Mesch, 1990). There has been more research done on this topic but a recent study proclaims that companies use flexible work arrangements to attract and hold on to their employees in the firm while the employees take benefit from this by managing their work demands and hence being less stressed and reducing the number of conflicts they face at workplaces. Some employees have fears in their minds of using this flexibility as they think they will be criticized and maybe some actions taken against them but studies now are proving and showing that flexibility in workplaces produces positive results (Smith *et al.* 2019).

The author of this thesis focuses on two different companies for this research. One of them is an Estonian electronics manufacturing company a subsidiary of one of the largest French group Éolane known as “Éolane Tallinn AS.” It is known to be the third largest electronics industry in Estonia. They have employees that are from different countries around the world having distinct cultural backgrounds. They produce specialty communications equipment, LED lighting for the automotive industry and industrial electronics.

The other company that is used for this thesis is “Teleperformance Canada.” It has been connecting customers for over 40 years with its new technology and agile ways of working. It is one of the world’s largest providers of work at home solutions. They believe in providing flexibility to their employees during seasonal peaks, natural disasters or the current pandemic. For them each interaction matters without worrying about the overhead and headaches of expanding their office.

These two companies were chosen for the research because they both are big multinational companies and hold a reputed position in the world right now. They have a number of employees from all around the world and each having their own thoughts and opinions about impact of flexible workplace to an employee’s performance and accomplishment of tasks.

Flexible working have become quite common in the whole world and is forecasted to keep on increasing in the next few years. However the problem lies in the implementation of the flexible working policies and practices in the different organizations and companies. Due to this the author has figured out a research problem that employee’s poor performance may not be only due to over

difficult tasks or lack of skills but the failure to understand the impact that a flexible working environment has on the performance of the employee. Thus this was the need to carry out this research to find out the connection between flexible working and employee performance through the eyes of the employees from these two multinational companies.

This master thesis has the aim to find out the factors considered important on the relationship and influence of flexible workplace on the performance based on the employee's opinions and make suggestions to the companies. This is very important for an organization in order to create a strong and positive relationship with the employees. In order to fulfill the aim of this thesis, the author has put down some research questions:

1. What do employees look for in a flexible working environment?
2. What challenges and difficulties do employees face with a non-flexible workplace?
3. In future how an employee's performance in workplace can be improved?

The company's employees and some managers will be taken into consideration to analyze data and come up with a relationship between flexible workplace and the performance efficiency of employees. To do this the author has used mixed method research; both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The author conducted interviews from both the companies in order to understand their point of views on flexible work environment and the execution of the tasks by the employees. The identification of the employees and managers are undisclosed for the safety and security of the companies. The author has also got a questionnaire filled from the supply chain and IT department of the respective companies.

The author has set down the following research tasks to fulfil the aim of this thesis:

- ✓ Study previous research to have clear concept about workplace flexibility and performance of employees.
- ✓ Design questionnaire and interview questions built on previous research and literature to understand the factors employees look for in a flexible environment.
- ✓ To find out the challenges and difficulties the employees face with a non-flexible environment by taking interviews and conducting a survey.
- ✓ To investigate how can a workplace be improved for an employee's performance and ability to accomplish different tasks by examining the surveys and interviews.

- ✓ To find out what kind of motivation and help is needed by employees to target their goals by coming up with a solution.

There should be a clear understanding between the employees and the employers to understand each other's problems and opinions. Employees should not have a fear of being fired if dealing with a personal emergency. The main purpose of this thesis is to find out the link between flexible working arrangement and performance of employee which is really important for every organization in today's era based on the gathered information. The results derived from this thesis can be used by other companies to help them create a positive and friendly environment for them and their employees.

This thesis is written in English by the author as the mode of all business communication in the companies is English. This means that all the quantitative and qualitative research was done in English. The interviews and the survey taken were in English language and thus all the results and findings derived from the collected data is also in English.

This thesis consists of three chapters. In the first chapter the author gives an overview of previous research and study done on relationship and impact of flexible working to an employee's performance. The second chapter deals with the research methods used during this thesis. It will explain how the result of this thesis is obtained from the information and data collected from managers and employees of the respected companies by using different methodologies. In the last and the third chapter of this thesis the author shows the results and the findings made from the research done and gives some suggestions and recommendations based on the outcome of the research.

Lastly the author of this thesis would like to pay gratitude to the supervisor of this thesis, Virve Siirde for her constant support and assistance during this research.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Theoretical background of flexible workplace

Options for flexible work have been present since the 1960s. Flexible working may seem like a “trend” right now but it’s actually been around since the 1960s and shows no signs of vanishing. Recent research and studies has supported and outlined the benefits of this working method ranging from increased productivity to overall company profitability (Logue, 2018).

A research done in 1983 by Pierce, J., & Newstrom, J indicated that a positive association between work schedule flexibility and employee performance and absenteeism exists. Flexible workplace is linked directly with an employee performance.

Flexible working conditions are getting increasingly popular in developed countries. According to a review in 2010 in which the findings suggested that flexibility in working patterns gives the worker more choice or control of work they are doing and want to do. It concluded that flexible working arrangements are likely to have positive effects on health and wellbeing. Scheduling by themselves of their timings and employee having authority over partial or early retirement were found to improve health that included systolic blood pressure and heart rate, mental health, sleep duration, tiredness, sleep quality and also co-workers constant support showed no health defects. On the other hand, involvement of commanding and dictatorship for the companies own interest, for example fixed-term contract and involuntary part-time employment, showed ambiguous or negative health effects (Joyce *et al.* 2010).

The most common flexible option at workplace that is being demanded by employees now a-days is working time flexibility. This has been gaining much more attention because of its ability to facilitate the needs of both employers and employees. Flexible working have been linked with the development of flexible work organizations for work-life balance combinations (Chung, 2009).

Flexible working styles have become more favorable due to many different factors. The most admired factor is that they increase employees’ value of life. Companies that support flexible working conditions and help employees balance out their work and personal life are rising and flourishing. It is mainly because of the employers who are now giving their employees’ personal lives more

importance than before. A study done in 2014 showed the effects of flexible working methods on employee performance. It came to a conclusion that flexible working systems are very important for the improvement of the company and the progression of employee performance. With reference to the results produced by this research, many of the flexible methods included, job's suitability for flexibility, job loyalty and attitude towards the given flexible working hours have a great effect on the employee's performance (Erkut, Funda, 2014).

It is commonly seen that companies and firms usually hesitate to apply the method of flexible work arrangements because they worry that this type of working environment will result in reduced productivity which means non-serious attitude at work for everybody which includes the employees. In 2017 Professor Sharon Clarke and Dr Lynn Holdsworth of the University of Manchester gave a practical explanation of a number of ways in which flexible working methods elevated both personal and team effectiveness. They showed that workers who worked flexibly molded their work environments to improve their own productivity and also the potential of their colleagues and co-workers, by engaging themselves in such a behavior and helping out their colleagues and showed more concentration in their work efforts. The research also revealed the manager's point of views in which they discussed in the interviews that they felt that flexible workers were more structured and productive. Also a link has been made between homeworkers and office workers proving the homeworkers more efficient in their work due to less distractions. Employees who are given the freedom to work flexibly show more dedication and the willingness to work hard and prove their loyalty to the organization. They feel motivated and inspired to work for their firm even if it means to work over time, change their working hours or even take work home after office hours. This all leads to positive welfare for the organization by an increase in productivity and performance.

1.2. Theoretical background of flexible working

Over the last decades, people have paid constant attention to the concepts of flexible working. From the employee's frame of mind flexibility means to have options to choose, that is when, for how long and for which employer the employee wants to work and give his attention (Jan *et al.* 2013).

Flexible working has become a hot topic lately. Social media is full of mesmerizing photos which includes having a laptop in front of a beautiful sunset with a cup of warm cappuccino beside it and

the fresh smell of nature really motivates you to work happily. Nowadays working flexibly has been linked with different hashtags on the social media such as #workfromanywhere, #laptoplifestyle and #flexiblework. Basically flexible working is known as flextime which refers to such working arrangements and conditions that considers an employee's personal needs and demands.

There are many different ways of working flexibly. Some of them are listed below (Rachael Down, 2019):

1. Part-time working or reduction in working hours– employees are allowed to work less than full-time hours.
2. Working from home – employees can work from home or somewhere else that is away from the working location.
3. Job sharing – a full-time job which can be split up between two employees who mutually agree on the working hours between them.
4. Compressed hours – employees work their normal working hours in lesser working days.
5. Flexi-time – employees have the freedom of when to start and finish their working hours.
6. Phased retirement - Employees decide at what age they wish to stop working.
7. Family-leave programmes: The employees get paid or unpaid leave to cater to their personal or family duties for a short time.

Flexible working is a wide topic to be discussed and has recently become a necessity for every employee. It not only has a positive effect on the employee's performance but also leaves a great impact on achieving an organization's goals and targets. Below are some other ways of providing flexible arrangements to an employee (Dex, Scheibl, 2002):

- Maternity leave
- Parental leave
- Emergency leave
- Assistance with childcare
- Workplace nurseries
- Term-time only work

All these arrangements and flexibility results in high productivity, less health related issues and a healthier working environment. Flexible working can have drastic effects on a person's attitude and behavior. A study done in 2018 shows that family friendly policies and workplace social support results in less stress among employed mothers and gives positive results (Hwang, 2018).

We are living in a world which is continuously changing either in the form of technology or working strategies. Information is easily in reach and an office employee or worker is allowed to work from anywhere and at any time. Activity based working is a new flexible workplace concept in which employees engage in many different activities with other employees to accomplish different tasks provided to them. This type of concept leads to ambitious and motivated employees in successfully achieving their tasks. The organizations that have the space for these kind of flexibility being offered at their workplace produce positive and efficient result (Van, 2011).

1.3. Factors affecting employee's performance

Employee performance is a term which refers to how the employees and the workers act in a workplace and how efficiently they perform a task they have been assigned to fulfill. According to Elizabeth *et al* in 2018, one of the factors affecting an employee's performance is workplace culture. It can bring a positive result depending on the culture provided.

These days the situation of having great competition between companies and their necessity to take effective measures to cope up with this rapidly changing marketing conditions, as well as to personnel needs, has given a rise to identify those factors that affect an employee's performance. A lot of factors are considered when discussing about an employee's performance. Some firm or environment-related factors include training culture, management support, environmental dynamism and organizational climate. Job-related factors include job environment, job autonomy, job communication whereas employee-related factors focus on intrinsic motivation, skill flexibility, skill level, proactivity, adaptability, and commitment. All these factors have strong impact on employee performance. A recent study showed that the job environment and its management support have the most powerful impacts on a job performance (Diamantidis, Chatzoglou, 2019).

The flexibility provided in working hours allows employees to focus on multiple tasks in today's competitive working environments. According to Rahman *et al* in 2013, the arrangement of flexible

working hours has been widely practiced in order to create balance between work and lifestyle and the results showed that the implementation of flexible working hours show a significant impact to the employees' motivation in the respected department.

The rise in the importance of efficiency factor in an employee is a factor which is greatly affecting the management of present time businesses in today's fast moving world. Therefore it has become a necessity for today's management and administrators to look into various employee motivation methods and decide which is the most successful and suitable one for their benefit. A business will not perform well if it does not constructively utilize its human resources which are its employees and workers. Another factor which is in great demand nowadays is job satisfaction. There are many research and studies that have evaluated the relationship between motivation and job satisfaction and its relationship between other related factors. Motivation is an action of satisfying an employees' different demands and expectations. Therefore the management of the company have to be familiar with the needs of every individual. The administration of a company has a very difficult task of satisfying and motivating every employee to boost them to achieve in their set targets for the company (Gulten, Ali, 2012).

A study done in 2013 proved that there are many factors and variables that affect the performance of employees at their workplaces. Performance of an employee can be defined as the completion of a designated task within the time limit and producing quality work. Some of these factors include; manager's attitude, organizational culture and environment, job content and financial rewards. All these factors have a positive impact on the performance of an employee (Rashid *et al.* 2013).

There are many factors that leaves an impact on the efficiency and performance of an employee. The companies and organizations have to keep a strict check on these to get the best out from their employees.

1.4. Importance of workplace environment

Making employees feel comfortable and satisfied in their workplace is widely regarded as an important performance target for the building's facilities management team. The underlying logic is

that environmental quality of the workplace has a significant impact on the employee's wellbeing, workplace satisfaction and productivity (Jungsoo, Richard, 2020).

The working environment nowadays demanded by employees should include satisfaction, less work stress, and good health. A recent study analyzes the effect of work stress and health status on working environment satisfaction. It was confirmed that women had relatively high interest in work environment satisfaction, whereas men demanded less work stress. It was analyzed that stress from work relations, specifically affects the whole person. The whole body gets fatigue which leads to a significant effect on the working environment satisfaction, and it is necessary to take effective and productive measures to improve the working environment satisfaction by reflecting the internal and external characteristics of each job. In particular, corporate organizations should introduce measures to increase personal respect among workers, and actively promote health and disease prevention activities (Sang, Yongil, 2020).

When it comes to flexible schedules, some managers might think that it's just the employees who will reap the rewards. This is not the case because from a rise in productivity to less absent days and significant savings to a more honest workforce, employers benefit equally from practicing flexible schedules in their workplaces. When the employees are happy and a more trustful environment is created, productivity increases. Stress is one of the biggest complaints in the workforce. A flexible working schedule builds an environment for better management of life's demands. After all, if your workers are stressed, they won't be able to perform at their peak. When they don't have to struggle all of life's demands all at once, employees have less stress and more positive feelings about their job (Jessica, 2018).

According to a case study done in 2013, it showed that the support of only the supervisor of the company or organization is not significant enough towards the employees' performance. Job aid and physical workplace environment are having an important relationship towards the employees' performance (Nina, Mohammad, 2013).

1.5. Previous research on flexibility at workplace

A recent research was done by many authors by specifically examining the flexibility of work at home and different scheduled flexibility where workers were engaged in work-related tasks. Multiple results indicated that work at home and schedule flexibility generally lead to less work-life conflict. The results also revealed that employees with workplace flexibility were able to work longer hours, sometimes one or two days more consisting of 8-hr per week. The benefit of working from home is increased when combined with schedule flexibility. These outcomes supports the case that workplace flexibility is beneficial for both the individuals that is the employees and the employers because of less work-life conflict and for the employees to work for longer hours leading to more profitable businesses (Hill, E. J *et al.* 2010).

A national survey done in Ireland in 2003 shows a recent rapid economic growth in which a strong urge is seen in the number of women in the employment field. This has all led to a remarkable increase in the numbers of dual-earner families. These changes have brought the issue of settlements between work and family care commitments. Flexible working arrangements in organizations have been recognized as one important means of balancing work and other commitments. The authors investigated the relationship between four flexible working arrangements given to them; flexitime, part-time working hours, working from home and job sharing, with two key employee outcomes; work pressure and work-life conflict. The results showed that part-time work and flexitime favored to reduced work pressure and work-life conflict. They concluded that it is important to differentiate between flexible working arrangements to discover their potential for reducing work pressure and work-life conflict (Russell, H. *et al.* 2009).

As a summary of the literature flexibility at workplace has been around since many ages and many research has been done on this but recently it has become an expectation from the organizations for every employee. An organization that supports its employees have a better output than a strict and non-flexible organization. It has shown and proved its positive effects on individuals and hence is very important for an employee's performance. Flexible working is no longer something that businesses can ignore. A misconception that flexible working is only for women with children or those with parenting responsibilities are disappearing and the whole credit goes to the change in UK law, which means all employees are entitled to request flexible working arrangements.

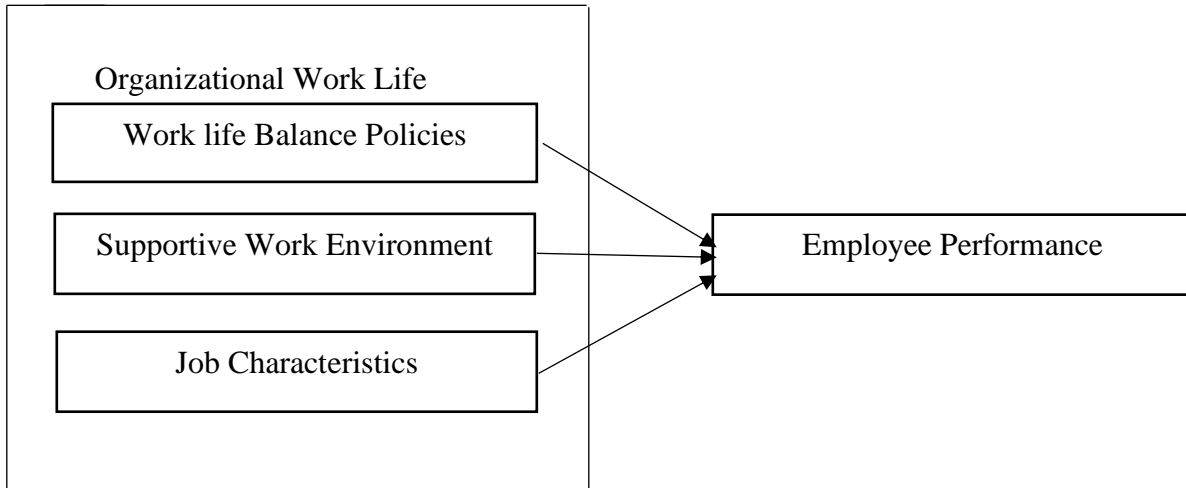


Figure 1: Theoretical framework of employee performance

Source: Made by the author based on theoretical framework of employee performance (Nilashini, 2018)

To have quality performance from the employees, every organization must provide some measures of flexibility such as work life balance policies, supportive work environment and valued job characteristics to every individual to produce best quality results.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the second chapter the author gives an explanation of the research methodologies, data collection method and analysis method. It describes how the research was made with managers and employees of both the companies and finally how the data was gathered for the analysis. This research is based on mixed method which comprises of both qualitative and quantitative research method.

2.1. Description of the samples

The samples taken for this thesis are two different companies to compare the results of people belonging to different fields of work. They both are big multinational companies and hold a very reputed place in the world market right now. They have employees from all around the world and each holds its own opinions and views about the impact of flexible workplace to an employee's performance. The first company taken into consideration is an Estonian electronics manufacturing company a subsidiary of one of the largest French group Éolane known as "Éolane Tallinn AS." According to the website of Éolane (www.corporate.eolane.com) it is known to be the third largest electronics industry in Estonia. It has been established for more than 40 years and is a diversified industrial group based on three main activities: electronics, M2M/IOT, services and solutions. Éolane is a global company with its offices in different countries of the world. Fifteen offices are located in France as well as the headquarter in Cambaray, France. One office is situated in Germany, one in Morocco, one in China and one in Estonia.

Éolane's board of directors is made up of five people and the executive committee consists of six members. All the subsidiary directors meet at least six times in a year to discuss all that's happening. Éolane is a growing company with more than 700 customers and about 3200 employees globally. Out of which 400-500 are employed in Tallinn, Estonia. It holds a reward of 91% customer service satisfaction. The company has eight main segments; defence, civil, railway, energy, automobile, industry, medical and telecoms. The departments in the company are engineering, manufacturing, sourcing and supply chain and aftermarket services.

As Éolane is a global company, it has a very distinguished set of values. They believe in respecting and valuing people by keeping up to their commitments and putting their customers as first priority. Their research and development policy promotes innovation as well as new and advanced solutions for industrial processes, the supply chain and project leadership. The department used for this thesis is the supply chain department. Under the supply chain department there are several sub departments which include; procurement department, logistics, customer demand planning, inventory management, capacity planning, production planning and sourcing department.

The other company that is used for this thesis is “Teleperformance Canada.” With reference to its website (www.teleperformance.com) it is also a global company located in around 80 countries of the world that is in a phase of growth so their number of employees and customers is rapidly changing every day. Teleperformance's digital integrated business services incorporates human touch and high technology to produce remarkable customer experiences. They believe in offering a global network of talents by ensuring every interaction is simple, fast, safe and more cost-effective to ensure best customer experiences.

In 2019 Teleperformance has been awarded as, the best use of AI and associated technologies by the European Contact Centre and Customer Service Awards. They have a strong believe on constant innovation and producing highly trained employees.

2.2. Managers Research Methodology Description

The author of this thesis conducted both qualitative and quantitative research methods for the managers of both the companies. The author conducted a survey first then the structured interviews with four managers two from each company, who were responsible for representing their respected departments of the company. This sequence helped the author in collecting the basic and background information about the topic first from the managers then going into the details through the interviews. The departments kept in focus during this research were the automobile (supply chain department) and the IT department.

The purpose of conducting structured interviews was to ensure that each interview held with the managers had completely same questions and in exact same order to make the comparison easier.

During this research the managers were kept anonymous and are mentioned as Manager A, Manager B, Manager C and Manager D. The identities of them were not revealed for safety and privacy concerns. The author conducted skype calls and voice calls for the interviews which they were informed a week prior to the interviews. The interviews were done in the end of March and beginning of April in 2020. The interviews lasted for about 30-40 minutes and recorded with a voice recorder only with permission from the managers and afterwards transcribed for this thesis.

When finding out the relation between work flexibility and adaptability with regards to employee performance and achievement of different tasks which is a very critical topic to be discussed and holds a very important position in the world today. To understand this topic in depth and with details it was essential to make sure this structured interview was done with main people of the management of that respected department.

The author chose to do qualitative research method for this thesis because it provides the human side of an issue or problem. It is really effective in giving solutions to topics such as human behavior, beliefs, opinions, emotions and relationships of individuals. It is a research method that focuses on obtaining data through open-ended and conversational communication. One on one interview is a personal interview and gives an opportunity to the interviewer to get details in depth from the respondents and collect precise and meaningful data from the respondents about their beliefs and opinions (David, Benard, 2008). The final interview questions are presented in Appendix 1.

The interview questions were based on Individual Flexibility Arrangements (under the Fair Work Act 2009) which seeks to promote workplace flexibility through the use of individual flexibility arrangements. The interviews started off with an introduction of the author and the understanding of the topic being researched, to make it easier for the interviewees to get the concept and idea behind the interview being held. They were given a little background and introduction about the topic and were asked to introduce themselves too before proceeding to the actual interview.

The interview was divided into sections which included; background questions, workplace environment and flexibility at workplace. All these sections had questions inspired from the Individual Flexibility Arrangements (under the Fair Work Act 2009). The reason for background questions was to get an idea about the manager's opinions and thinking of flexible working environment with relation to employee performance.

The second part of the interview was about workplace environment. It was to know and understand the manager's point of view that a working environment creates on an employee. The challenges or the hurdles a person might face if not given the rights of flexible working environment. It was to understand the managers thinking on how to balance work and his personal life and with what kind of flexibilities given to him. Also is there any impact or influence on an employee if he has to work at different times of the days or weeks.

The third part of the interview was based on the questions about flexibility at workplace. It was done to get an understanding from the manager about how they see the performance of an employee can be improved further on. What for them is an ideal work schedule like and how they are responding to this flexibility at workplace in their company.

The analysis of the interviews is based on the interview transcriptions and are analyzed through a cross-case analysis presented in Appendix 5.

Quantitative research method was also used by the author for the manager's research. Data was collected from the managers by sending them a questionnaire to be filled and returned to the author. To some of the managers, the questionnaire or the survey was sent through a link on message as they had requested, while to the others the questionnaire was sent through an email and got response through an email as well. This all started in the middle of March and the data collection ended by the end of March. The questionnaire had different questions than the interview so a variety of data was easily available through this technique.

The author chose to do a questionnaire as a quantitative research method for managers because it gives the result on a larger scale and is easily interpreted through figures, tables and charts. Also this method helps to analyze data through statistical forms. The results are accurate and valid as you know who the respondents of your survey were during the research.

The questionnaire had 24 questions in total with different blocks. Some questions were in the form of Likert 5-point scale where the respondents were given 5 options to choose from; strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. The respondents had to choose the most suitable one that best described their opinions and views. Some other questions were multiple choice questions and giving a rate to a particular statement in which the respondents were asked about different aspects.

2.3. Employees Research Methodology Description

The main focus and purpose for the employee's research was to understand their opinions and ideas about the topic of flexible working environment with regards to employee's performance and their accomplishment of tasks and work goals. Again the author conducted both qualitative and quantitative research method to get more and clear results from the people.

The author conducted 2 interviews from the employees, 1 from each company. The employees were chosen for the interview as well because the author wanted to have an understanding about their thoughts and opinions too before coming to a conclusion. The employees chosen for the interview were told in advance to be prepared for it. One employee was chosen from the IT department of the company Teleperformance and one was chosen from the supply chain department of the company Éolane. This was only done to get more information for the research.

The employees had the exact same set of questions to be asked for the interview as the managers had to make the comparison accurate and easier for the author. During the research of this thesis they were kept anonymous and their identities were not revealed but referred to as Employee 1 and Employee 2. With their permission and consent the interviews were recorded during the voice calls and skype calls. These interviews lasted for approximately 35-40 minutes in total and later transcribed for the thesis.

The main method of research used for the employees was the quantitative method. They were given a questionnaire to fill having a total of 24 questions in which they were asked about different aspects of flexible working leading to an impact on their performance. The questionnaire is presented in Appendix 2.

The author sent out 70 questionnaires to be filled. Out of which 51 were answered without any errors. The questionnaire was sent in the form of Google forms through a link. The response time to fill the questionnaire was approximately 5-10 minutes. The major reason for the author to collect data through this survey from the employees was to get their innermost information on the impact of their work performance with respect to workplace flexibility.

The survey consisted of five background questions, seven questions about workplace environment and twelve questions about flexibility at workplace. Most of the questions were based on the

theoretical perspective and research on flexible workplace and employee's performance. Background questions consisted questions on respondents age, gender, job role, company name and department name.

The sixth and seventh question which was under the section of workplace environment asked the respondent about their total number of working days in a week and in those days how often do they feel stressed due to the workload (Julia, 1996).

Questions eight to ten was about employee satisfaction and motivation towards the company. It was to find out about their needs and benefits being fulfilled from the company. Employee participation and engagement at workplace has a big effect on employee's job satisfaction, employee productivity, and employee commitment which can lead to create comparative advantage for the organization (Komal, Tahir, 2007).

Questions eleven and twelve were about the employee's company. It was to find out how likely they would recommend their workplace to others and how much they would rate the comfort level of their workplace. This was a necessary question to ask to know about their company's working environment and employee satisfaction.

From question thirteen to seventeen, all these questions were presented using the 5-point Likert scale. The respondents had a choice to choose answers from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. It had questions related to flexibility at workplace. According to Nemoto, T, & Beglar, D in 2014 a Likert scale has multiple categories from which respondents can choose to show their opinions, attitudes, or feelings about a particular issue. They are most frequently used for investigations of individual difference variables, such as motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence.

According to an article in 2018 it is seen in the UK, that there is widespread distrust of flexible working. Many senior people worry that if they allow their employees to work outside the office, it will be a privilege that will be put to wrong use. Many working leaders still have concerns regarding trust, accountability and being present to work. Hence, it is often discouraged because managers and business owners have a fear that it will harm their productivity. Question fifteen was based on this whether flexible working environment in a company leads to non-serious attitude at work.

From questions eighteen till twenty-four, they were all about an employee's personal opinion with regards to workplace flexibility. The information gathered from these questions were related to their current method of working flexibly, how their working life can be improved and whether or not they are looking for a different job. These question were really important to collect information from as Anderson, D and Kelliher, C in 2009 mentioned that flexible working has an impact on employee engagement through a positive relationship with organizational commitment, job satisfaction and employee discretionary behavior so it was necessary to ask about an employee's organization behavior towards employee job satisfaction.

3. RESEARCH RESULT

In the third chapter of this thesis the author first shows the results of the managers and employees research that was collected after the research. After that the author exhibits both the results together with academic findings to compare the results and come up with a conclusion and give suggestions that the author thinks is best suitable for it.

3.1. Results of manager's research

The author conducted four interviews in the manager's research with two important managers of Éolane from the supply chain department and two key managers from Teleperformance from the IT department. The main reason for the author to conduct interviews with these four managers of the respected company was that they are the ones who understand and know their employees the best. The managers of the company are the ones who take important decisions about and for the employees so it was an essential part of this thesis to hear to their opinions on this topic. The names of the managers were kept anonymous therefore the author decided to call them as Manager A, Manager B, Manager C and Manager D. Summaries and analysis of the interviews done are presented in the sub headings below. Also a cross-case analysis based on the interviews done is also included in Appendix 5.

3.1.1. Flexible working environment arrangements for employees

All the four interviews conducted with the four interviewees pointed that for employees to perform and behave their best at an organization or company must have some suitable conditions and arrangements for them to work productively.

“I think in today's time flexibility means different to everybody but for me as a personal opinion starting work at my own time and working from anywhere across the globe is flexibility for me. That's the flexibility I would prefer as timings and places are the key features of a flexibility. Especially in today's time this is what flexibility is and I would want my employer to give me so as a manager that's what I would like to give my employees.” (Manager A).

Manager A referred flexibility in a workplace as his own preference for starting and ending his work. He felt the need to be free and relaxed by working from anywhere to bring out his best possible outcome.

“A flexible working environment for me is to give a deadline of the work to be submitted but not continuously interfere and keep on asking about it. Basically I look for freedom in a flexible working environment.” (Manager B).

When asked the same question from Manager B, he wanted the freedom to work as well. Constant interferences and hurdles in his way of working does not mean flexibility.

Manager C had a similar point of view, *“There are quite many things that a person looks for in a flexible working environment, and personally I want to have flexible working hours and different options like working from home or remotely.”*

Manager D had the same thoughts as others but with a slightly different angle to it. *“Personally what I am looking is for instance if I have to for instance go to some appointments or do something personal parallel to my work, I would really appreciate flexible working environment which means I could make these appointments in my office working time. I think that’s quite important for me personally.”*

All the managers agreed on the same point. For them flexible working environment means having an opportunity and freedom to work whether it is from home or from anywhere around the world. All of them had similar thoughts and factors that wanted to be present in a flexible working environment.

3.1.2. Challenges and difficulties with a non-flexible working environment

Millions of Americans are under extreme pressure to balance work and family responsibilities. The feeling of overwork is out of control, with nearly half of employees feeling overworked or overwhelmed by their workplace responsibilities. (Robert 2016)

Every job has its pros and cons and same is the case with a non-flexible working environment.

“Let’s look at it this way. Some people have kids to drop to school at 9 in the morning and reach the office at 9 am too which brings a problem right there. I would be really frustrated, I would have to cut down on one or the other which will bring frustration and an in-balance in my personal life and that would affect my output at work too. This is an example of one of the challenges faced with a non-

flexible working environment. Another one could be let's suppose I am having a flu and if given the option to work from home I can still bring something to the table rather than taking a leave and staying home doing nothing or coming to work and risking others.” (Manager A)

Manager A was very excited to answer this question and gave a very detailed explanation. He compared family issues with work and suggested a possible challenge that one can face with a non-flexible working environment.

“When one is not given the opportunity for working flexibly, he may face many challenges which may include not feeling or being motivated enough to work, which would mean no matter how hard he try he may fail because he is not willing to work which would result in less productivity. Also his personal life can be affected to some extent too.” (Manager B).

Manager C had a very straight-forward answer to say, *“He/She might not meet the deadline of his work either because he is exhausted, tired or caught up in some personal issues.”*

Manager D had a very family oriented answer. *“Well I think it's quite stressful if you are not let to do and don't have the possibility to have a little bit of time for your personal things. It can be very stressful especially for families that have little kids which means work is not being a benefit thing for them because of this and that's very difficult.”*

All the managers stated that a good working environment should give the freedom to their employees to have some time for their personal needs otherwise their execution at work will be greatly affected and as a result company will have to face the consequences.

3.1.3. Future of employee's performance in workplace

When discussing about the future of new employees in a workplace and their company's idea on flexible working arrangements every manager had something slightly different to say. They all gave a very detailed explanation on this topic.

Manager A gave a very detailed explanation to this question. *“I think a constant know of what the employees personal life is dealing with can help them keep engaged at the workplace. If the employer is least bothered about his employees personal life than there is that connection which drops their and workplace is not a healthy environment to work anymore. In my opinion the employer should put*

some time and effort to know his employees and understand their circumstance, his struggles and achievements. If you always focus on the weakest point of an employee, you will never be able to bring out the good so focus on the strength, the positivity, make the employees feel encouraged, value them and that will always bring more output to the table.”

A continuous checkup should be monitored for every employee present in a company to look out for all the possibilities of employee struggles and challenges to help them in providing their best to the company.

“I think it all depends on the flexibility being offered to them. The more flexible the working environment, the more productive output from the employees. Flexible environment for me leads to more encouragement and motivation for the employees to perform their best at work.” (Manager B)

Manager B had an opinion that productive output from the employees and the flexibility being offered to them goes hand in hand.

Manager C had same point of views as Manager A. *“There could be a lot of factors which can effect on the performance of employees like giving value to their works, providing some motivational and encouraging stuffs and respect their ideas etc.”*

Manager D had a strong influence for individual negotiation with the heads and supervisors of the company. *“That’s a good question. I think it more has to be looked at it individually. People have different kinds of situations and schedules. I am pretty sure there could be some compromises done where people can come together and maybe a bit more negotiation with their supervisors or leaders.”*(Manager D).

All the managers from both the companies agreed that there is a strong connection between employee performance and the flexibility they are being provided at work. Employee’s performance and efficiency at workplace goes hand in hand with the kind of environment they are being given by their companies and organization.

3.2. Results of employee's research

3.2.1. Background Data

70 questionnaires were sent out to be filled from both the companies. 51 people answered to the employee research questionnaire completely and without any errors. Out of the 51 responses 26 (51%) responses were from the females and 25 (49%) were males. There were more females who answered the questionnaires than males. The responses were mainly from the age group of 35-54 holding a total of 25 (49%), 22 (43.1%) were from the age group of 25-34 and 4 (7.8%) were from 18-24 age group. A question was asked to write their company name so the author has a clear understanding of the numerical data of both the companies. A figure is presented in Appendix 4 named as visualized figure of the company's name to show the respondents names of the company. Although the survey was anonymous but it was mandatory for the respondents to write the names of their departments they work in and their job roles in that designated department. The summary of job roles is presented in appendix 3.

The author has focused on two departments for this thesis; IT and supply chain. As both these departments have sub-departments in them so the response rate based on those departments summary is given below.

- Account and Finance – 3 (5.9% of all responses)
- Client Services – 6 (11.7% of all responses)
- Computer Technical Support – 1 (2% of all responses)
- HR – 3 (5.9% of all responses)
- IT – 7 (13.7% of all responses)
- Supply Chain – 27 (53% of all responses)
- Workforce Management – 4 (7.8% of all responses)

The author performed One-way ANOVA test to analyze the responses from different departments, age, and job role. The results were based on $\alpha = (0.05)$, $(P=0.000686)$, and $(F=3.369016)$. Since the P-value 0.000686 is less than alpha (0.05) it shows that the results are statistically significant.

3.2.2. Workplace Environment

Questions that were under this block of the survey were aimed at getting to know the environment of the respondent's company and how motivated and satisfied are they with their current working environment. Question six was about how many days do they work and 100% response came for 5 days a week. The next question was about the level of stress due to the work load. 41 (80.4%) agreed that they sometimes feel stress due to the workload given to them. There was a tie between never being stressed and always stressed with 4(7.8%) responses for each and there were only 2 respondents that felt stressed twice holding a response of 3.9%. Whereas 0 (0%) was once.

Question eight was about the motivation level of the employee to work with regards to the ease and flexibility of work provided by their organization. Out of the 51 respondents 29 (56.9%) were neutral, they neither agreed nor disagreed with their inspiration level to work. 14 (27.5%) agreed, 5 (9.8%) disagreed and they did not feel inspired enough to meet their goals and targets set for their work. Only 3 (5.9%) strongly agreed in achieving their goals at work due to the ease of working provided by their organization and 0 (0%) voted for strongly disagree.

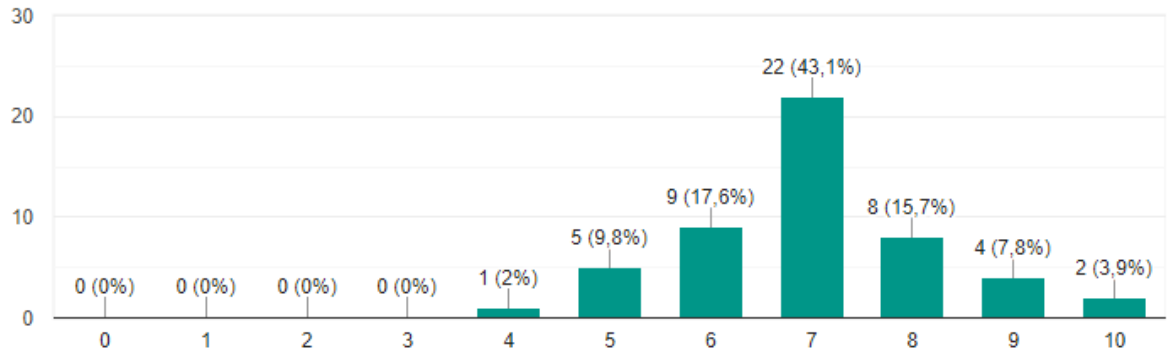
The next question was about the satisfaction of the employees with respect to their total benefits package offered by their respected companies. 23 (45.1%) respondents were neutral on this topic. 19 (37.3%) were somewhat satisfied, 5 (9.8%) were somewhat dissatisfied, 3 (5.9%) were very satisfied and only 1 (2%) of the respondents were very dissatisfied.

Question ten was about the needs of the employees being fulfilled by their companies. 5 (9.8%) answered extremely well, 15 (29.4%) agreed to very well, and 31 (60.8%) answered somewhat well. In relation to this question the author asked the next question which was about recommending their workplace to others. 22 (43.1%) respondents gave a rate of 7 in recommending their workplace. The details are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Visualized graph of recommending workplace to others

How likely is it that you would recommend your workplace to others?

51 answers



Source: Author’s calculations based on survey data

The author did One-way ANOVA test to analyze the responses from these questions. The results were based on $\alpha= (0.05)$, $(P=0.924399)$, and $(F=3.490295)$. Since the P-value 0.924399 is greater than alpha (0.05), it shows that there is no significant difference.

The last question of this block was about the comfort level of their work environment. 5 (9.8%) respondents answered excellent, 52 (27.9%) answered above average and 19 (37.3%) answered average. This shows there is only a small amount of employee that thinks the comfort level provided by their company is good.

3.2.3. Flexibility at Workplace

From questions thirteenth to seventeen, they were presented in a form of 5-point Likert scale and the respondents had to choose one option from it.

Table 1: Visualized results based on flexibility at workplace summary

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Flexible workplace environment produces more efficient performance	0	10 (19.6%)	17 (33.3%)	9 (17.6%)	15 (29.4%)

Flexible working conditions should be present in the contract of the job.	5 (9.8%)	0	2 (3.9%)	18 (35.3%)	26 (51%)
Flexible working environment leads to a non-serious attitude at work.	17 (3.3%)	26 (51%)	3 (5.9%)	4 (7.8%)	1 (2%)
I am satisfied with the workplace flexibility offered by my organization.	0	1 (2%)	25 (49%)	23 (45.1%)	2 (3.9%)
My commitment to the organization would be questioned if I chose to use flexible work options.	9 (17.6%)	24 (47.1%)	9 (17.6%)	7 (13.7%)	2 (3.9%)

Source: created by author

The author performed One-way ANOVA test to analyze the responses from these questions. The results were based on $\alpha = (0.05)$, $(P=0.984331)$, and $(F=2.964708)$. As we can see the P-value 0.984331 is greater than alpha (0.05), it means that there is no significant difference found.

The next question was about the importance of flexible working option. Out of the 51 responses – 35 (68.6%) answered very important – 10 (19.6%) answered somewhat important and 6 (11.8%) answered important. Majority of the respondents agreed to have flexible working option as an important part of their job life.

Question nineteen was about the type of flexible work option the employees are currently using and the result summary is shown in table below.

Table 2: Visualized result based in flexible work options

Flexible Work Options	Frequency (number of responses)	Percentage
Flexible work hours for example start late or early to meet responsibilities external to work.	26	51%
Work from home	16	31.4%
Compressed work hours	8	15.7%
Job sharing	1	2%

Source: created by author

The twentieth question was about a condition that would make an employee's working life better. The summary of the respondent's results is given below;

- Flexible Working – 6 (11.8% of all responses)
- More Holiday – 13 (25.5% of all responses)
- A Promotion – 17 (33.3% of all responses)
- More money – 14 (27.5% of all responses)
- More support in your role – 1 (2% of all responses)

A large number of people chose promotion to make their working life better. Whereas money was chosen as the next best option for better employed life.

The author performed One-way ANOVA test to analyze the responses from these questions. The results were based on $\alpha = (0.05)$, $(P=0.690697)$, and $(F=4.256495)$. Since the P-value 0.690697 is greater than alpha (0.05), it means that there is no significant difference found.

The author wanted to find out if given the option of working more flexibly what would be the response of the people. Out of the 51 responses – 50 (98%) of the respondents agreed to the option of having more flexibility at their workplace and only 1 (2%) response was in favor of not having the option of working more flexibly.

To get a deeper understanding and knowledge about the flexibility at workplace, the next question was about the type of flexibility that suits an employee the best. In which working from home had the highest percentage, 18 (35.3%) respondents liked the idea of working from home. 16 (31.4%) were in favor of compressed hours working, friendly Environment suited 14(27.5%) respondents, job share – 2 (3.9%) and 1 (2%) chose none of the above.

To find out the relationship and impact of flexible workplace to an employee's performance the author asked the next question which was about the career of an employee and if they get an option to change it why would they change it. The results of the research came out as follow. More freedom at workplace – 6 (11.8%) of the total response, More money – 17 (33.3%), I am bored - 7 (13.7%) and to learn something new – 21 (41.2%) of the total response. Majority of the people wanted to learn something new by changing their career.

The author performed One-way ANOVA test to analyze the responses from these questions. The results were based on $\alpha = (0.05)$, $(P=0.465193)$, and $(F=4.45897)$. Since the P-value 0.465193 is greater than alpha (0.05), it means that there is no significant difference found.

The author of this thesis marked the last question of the questionnaire to get an opinion and ideas from the employees and asked them if they would like to add anything to this research. The following recommendations were made by the respondents.

- Space for better communication.
- Need improvement for professional approaches.
- Couple of things with culture
- Flexibility should be provided by every company
- Flexible environment leads to positive energy in employees.
- I hope this survey helps employees in the future.
- Flexibility at workplace has a big impact on an employee's performance and efficiency.

The author conducted two interviews from one of the employees from each company to get a more detailed and clear understanding of this topic.

What do you look for in a flexible working environment?

“Every employee wants to work in an organization where they feel free to work, and not burdened or discouraged so that they can focus on work and give their best performance. Freedom of work should be given.” (Employee 1)

Employee 2 also had some meaning to flexible working. *“In my opinion working in a flexible environment means having a chance to be flexible at work. Flexible working for me would be to work from home, remotely work and achieve tasks.”*

Both the employees had an opinion of being provided the best suitable flexibility an organization can offer to bring the most efficient results from the employees.

The challenges and difficulties one might face with a non-flexible working environment.

“According to me there are ample of examples of difficulties one might encounter with a non-flexible working environment. One of them is that there are some students who study and work parallel and if they are working with an organization who have non-flexible environment that is very difficult for them to survive. They ultimately drop their studies or stop working due to one reason or the other.” (Employee 1)

Employee 2 gave examples of pandemic and other natural disasters to answer this question. *“I think an employee’s health and mental state could be affected if not given the flexibility to work with different situations and circumstances. We can take the example of the current situation.”*

Both the employees gave very strong examples of challenges that an employee can face due to non-flexible working environment. The current pandemic of 2020 is the greatest example one can see of flexible working. If companies did not had the option of flexible working, people would have been in such stress.

In future how an employee’s performance in workplace can be improved?

Employee 1 had a straight forward answer to this question *“To improve employee’s performance and engagement in working place, organization has to boost or motivate their employees by giving them good salary, flexible environment conditions and other facilities that can motivate employees to perform their best.”*

“I think it can be improved by more interactions, more reports, more feedbacks from the managers, more meetings, encouragement by the employers, rewards where possible depending on the performance of individual employee. Not being too strict and providing flexible hours to work.”
(Employee 2)

All the employees agreed on having the option of flexible working environment and providing suitable working arrangements to produce best quality work with motivation and dedication in achieving their targets.

The detailed interview is presented in the cross-case analysis in appendix 5.

3.3. Discussion and suggestions

In this section of the thesis the author writes down the conclusions of the research results based on the research questions, and brings them out with the research findings and the theoretical literature. Also the author gives suggestions and recommendations that he thinks are suitable for the companies.

The main aim of this research was to find out the factors considered important on the relationship and influence of flexible workplace on the performance of an employee. From literature reviewed it is clear that flexible working environment and flexibility of work provided by an organization has a strong influence on the performance of an employee. By offering a strong and supportive environment for the employees to work in an organization, you can yield quality performance from them.

The first research question of this thesis was “What do employees look for in a flexible working environment?”

The managers of both the companies has highlighted the key and the most important factors that they look for in a flexible working environment. They all have included different variables and conditions that they think should be given to every employee today in this era of working. Also the employees have given their point of view on this topic and it is quite clear from the studies found and research done that there are several different agreements that employees consider in their mode of working as flexible working environment.

All of them want the flexibility option in their working style and by flexibility they mean freedom of work. For them the work quality should matter and not from where the work is being done. In general it means remotely working, compressed working hours and constantly not keeping a strict check on an employees work. An employee can perform its best when he is motivated enough to work so for them it also means working hours should not be too tight on an employee and have some relaxation and free time to cater their personal needs and jobs.

By the questionnaire result we can see that 51% of the respondents strongly agreed to have the option of flexible working in their job contracts. Flexible working hours meaning to start late or finish early also had a 51% vote for strongly agree. With regards to this question the employees in the questionnaire voted 98% to the option if they would be given a chance to work more flexibly so they definitely will avail this opportunity. We can also conclude that working from home was the most favorable condition for the employees that they want in a flexible working environment and had a result of 35.3%.

The second research question of this thesis was “What challenges and difficulties do employees face with a non-flexible workplace?”

From the managers research the author concluded that there are many different challenges and hurdles an employee can face if not provided with a flexible working environment. The managers in the interviews agreed to the factor that if a suitable working environment is not given, the employees may have to drop one of their tasks or the other. They have a constant feeling of frustration, anxiety and high stress levels which makes an in-balance in their personal and professional lives.

In order to have good quality work produced the employees need to be motivated enough to work and give their best but due to non-flexible working environment, they do not feel like working which results in less productivity at work. Sometimes due to the work pressure and load they might not be able to meet the deadlines of their projects and tasks which causes a problem in the organizations.

Based on the opinions given by the employees in the questionnaire we can see that 80.4% of the total respondent's felts stressed at work due to workload by their organization. They feel a constant pressure from the heads of the companies and not enough support from them leads to thinking of switching to a new job.

The third research question of this thesis was “In future how an employee’s performance in workplace can be improved?”

Based on the managers opinions through the interviews it is seen that they all agreed to a constant knowledge and know how about their employees. There should be one on one meetings and interactions with the employees to negotiate and discuss their achievements, personal lives and the struggles they might be going through. There should not be a too strict environment to work where the employees cannot put up his ideas and discuss his thoughts. Every individual should have its value and ideas respected.

The employees should be rewarded with bonuses and promotions based on their quality of work done to increase their motivation to work and produce better results for their companies. As 33.3% respondents in the questionnaire agreed to the fact that promotion can make their working life better .Employees should be given the opportunity to arrange their working time themselves and to fit them in flexibly with the current circumstances. Productivity in companies with flexible working times does not reduced. The staff will still fulfill their workload as before, but at various times from different locations.

Based on the discussions, the author now brings suggestions to the management of Éolane and Teleperformance on how they can view and have a flexible working environment impact the performance of their employees.

1. The author suggests that the company should provide such an environment to work where the employees are not stressed and scared because of their workload but motivated and energized enough to bring out the best of them.
2. Another suggestion that the author gives to the management of both the companies is that the ideas and thoughts of every employee should be valued and respected. They should be given the freedom to speak their minds easily so they can put forward their problems and not worry about being fired or disrespected.
3. Another activity the companies can do is to have weekly meetings with the employees to discuss all their problems and negotiate if there is any need for flexibility to them from the organization. This can have a strong relationship with the employees and the management. Also the employees will be loyal and honest towards the company and in achieving their set targets and goals.
4. As the demand for flexibility has increased now a days, the companies should provide some incentives or flexibility in the form of different activities. For example the company can allow every employee some days to work from home or have shorter working Fridays. They can even have once a week some party or rewards day to motivate and encourage the employees to give their best. These activities can bring a balance in work life of the employees and have a positive effect on the employees' health as well.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this master's thesis was to find out the relationship and the effects of a flexible working place to an employee's performance based on a manufacturing company based in Estonia and an IT company located in Canada. Its target was to find out the factors that influence employee's performance with flexible working environment conditions. In order to reach this, the author of this thesis had put down the following research questions;

1. What do employees look for in a flexible working environment?
2. What challenges and difficulties do employees face with a non-flexible workplace?
3. In future how an employee's performance in workplace can be improved?

This thesis was done through a mixed method of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The research was based on two companies, one from Estonia and one from Canada. In the qualitative research method the author conducted four structured interviews with the main managers from the departments of supply chain and IT. All the interviews were done through voice calls and Skype. Quantitative research method was one through a questionnaire that was sent to 70 employees in total from both the companies.

To summarize the findings from the theoretical literature, the author found out that there is a strong relationship between flexibility at workplace and employee performance. Many research has been done on this topic and it has been proved that a flexible working environment has a great impact on an employee's performance. If a flexible working environment is not provided it can lead to many health related issues and an in balance in personal and professional life.

When looking at the findings from the research of this thesis, the author came to a conclusion that an employee needs to be valued and respected while given the freedom and choice of work to bring out the best from them. If a flexibility at workplace is not provided it can negatively influence the performance of an employee. As from the results of the questionnaire it is clear that the employees know what their tasks and duties are but they want more flexibility at work and for them to give their hundred percent to the company they need to have less stress and more support.

The author made suggestions to the managers of both the companies on how they can improve the workplace flexibility for better performance from their employees. The author suggested that there should be more interactions of employees and the management to discuss one on one the possible flexibility they can be offered to best suit them with providing the best results to the company and not afraid of voicing out their opinions and problems. Also the author recommended them to create a friendly environment for the employees to work where they don't feel stress or burdened but enjoying working and not take it as something they just have to do for the sake of money.

The author also brings out the limitations of this thesis. One of them is that the interviews were conducted through Skype and voice calls in which it is possible that the managers might not be able to easily express their opinions. It could have been better if the interviews were conducted face to face or physically to have more clear understanding. Also the questionnaire was focused on two departments, the author feels more information could have been collected if other departments were also researched for this thesis.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview Questions

Interview Background

The main purpose and aim for conducting this interview is to understand your opinions and point of views on a topic that is very important to be discussed today in this fast moving world. This interview is held for a thesis research work on the topic, **“Relationship and impact of flexible workplace to an employee’s performance.”**

Your responses and opinions will be recorded with your consent and written down later for the thesis. Your identity will be kept anonymous and none of your personal details will be shown such as name and picture. Participation is voluntary and you can stop the interview at any time you want.

Thank you for your time and valued response!

Definition of terms

Before starting the interview, some things that are needed to be mentioned here;

Workplace flexibility is a worldwide strategy that can connect the needs of employers and their employees. This includes when, where, and how the work is done. Flexibility should be mutually beneficial and of assistance to both the employer and the employee and produce productive outcomes.

Employee performance is referred to as the productivity, efficiency and the quality of work they produce. It shows how an employee is executing his job in fulfilling his targets and goals set by the organization.

Background Questions:

- What do you look for in a flexible working environment?
- In your opinion how important is flexible working?
- In your opinion does working flexibly benefit you both personally and professionally?
- Tell me of a time when you had two important and critical projects or assignments engaging your time. How did you handle and what happened in that scenario?

Workplace Environment:

- Tell me about the challenges and difficulties one might face with a non- flexible working environment.
- What's your opinion on being available to work at different times throughout the day, a week or even a month?
- What kinds of flexibility would be helpful to you in balancing your work and home life?

Flexibility at Workplace:

- In future how do you think an employee's performance in workplace can be improved?
- Let's say you are being hired in a company, what would your ideal work schedule be like?
- I have come to know that workplace flexibility has been a hot topic lately. How has your company responded to this discussion?

Appendix 2. Questionnaire

The actual questionnaire was built in a different format, but as it was not possible to download in that same format, the questions are put down here to show what they were.

Dear responder,

This survey is created by Yumna Ikram, who is a student of Masters in Business Administration (MBA) at Tallinn University of Technology. This survey is created as a part of the research for the thesis on the topic “Relationship and impact of flexible workplace to an employee’s performance.”

This survey will only take 5-10 minutes to fill in.

Responses to the questionnaire will be kept anonymous.

Participation is voluntary but highly appreciated.

Thank you for your contribution and time!

Yumna Ikram

I. Background Questions:

1. Age:

Choose from the following:

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-54
- 55-65
- 66- ...

2. Gender:

- Male
- Female

3. What is your job role?

- Team Lead
- Manager
- Intern

- Senior Manager
- Other (Please specify) _____

4. Company Name: _____

5. Department Name: _____

II. Workplace Environment:

6. How many days a week do you work?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 5
- 7

7. In a week, how often do you feel stressed at work due to the workload?

- Once
- Twice
- Sometimes
- Always
- Never

8. I am inspired to meet my goals at work due to the ease provided by my organization.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral / Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

9. Overall how satisfied are you with your total benefits package.

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neutral / Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

10. How well your company meets your needs?

- Extremely well
- Very well
- Somewhat well

- Not so well
- Not at all well

11. How likely is it that you would recommend your workplace to others?

Not at all likely Extremely Likely
 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

12. How would you rate the comfort level of your work environment?

- Excellent
- Above Average
- Average
- Below Average
- Very Poor

III. Flexibility at Workplace:

Please rate the following statements:

13. Flexible workplace environment given to employees produces more efficient performance.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

14. Flexible working conditions should be present in the contract of the job.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

15. Flexible working environment in a company leads to a non-serious attitude at work.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

16. I am satisfied with the workplace flexibility offered by my organization.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

17. My commitment to the organization would be questioned if I chose to use flexible work options.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

18. In your opinion how important is having the option of flexible working?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Important

- Neither important nor unimportant
- Not at all important

19. Out of the following flexible work options which one are you currently using?

- Compressed work hours
- Flexible work hours for example start late or early to meet responsibilities external to work.
- Job sharing
- Work from home
- Others (Please specify) _____

20. What one thing would make your working life better?

- Flexible Working
- More Holiday
- A Promotion
- More money
- More support in your role

21. Would you like to have the opportunity to work more flexibly?

- Yes
- No

22. What type of flexible working suits you the best?

- Working from home
- Compressed hours
- Job share
- Friendly Environment
- None of the above

23. If you had to change your career, why would you want to change it?

- More freedom at workplace
- More money
- I am bored
- To learn something new
- Other (Please specify) _____

24. Anything you would like to add?

Date: _____

Appendix 3. Visualized results based on employee's job role in their companies

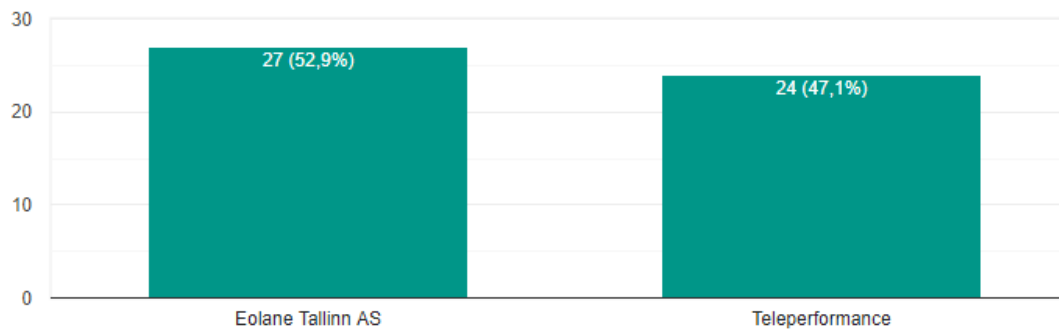
Job Role	Frequency (number of responses)	Percentage
Team lead	6	11.8%
Manager	13	25.5%
Intern	2	3.9%
Senior manager	4	7.8%
Commodity Buyer	4	7.8%
Procurement Specialist	3	5.9%
Planner	3	5.9%
Engineer	2	3.9%
Logistic Specialist	2	3.9%
Computer Technical Support Specialist	2	3.9%
Computer Systems Analyst	2	3.9%
Customer Demand Specialist	1	2%
Procurement Specialist	1	2%
Senior Procurement Specialist	1	2%
Customer demand Specialist	1	2%
HR Specialist	1	2%
Client Specialist	1	2%
Vice president	1	2%
Help Desk Analyst	1	2%

Source: created by author

Appendix 4. Visualized figure of the company's name

Company name

51 answers



Source: Author's calculations based on survey data

Appendix 5. Cross-Case Analysis

Question	Manager A	Manager B	Manager C	Manager D	Employee 1	Employee 2
What do you look for in a flexible working environment?	-Starting work at own time. -Working from anywhere -Timings and places of work	-No interferences in my work -No burden -freedom	-Flexible working hours -Work from home	-Time for personal needs	-Freedom -Work from home	-Work from home -Remote
In your opinion how important is flexible working?	-Not governed by rules -The more flexibility given the better he performance -Trusting your employees - Freedom	-Really important -Employee comfort -Positive results	-Extremely important -Space to employees -Comfortable -Achieve targets set by company	-Not that important -Have to be available all the time	-Very important -Timings	-Very important -relaxation
In your opinion does working flexibly benefit you both personally and professionally?	-Yes -More time with family -More comfortable environment	-Yes -More family time -Less stress	-Yes -Better performance -Quick results	-Yes -Personal matters easily fixed -Less stress	-Of course -More family time -Productive output of work	-Yes -Traditional way of working is good -Flexibility be given
Tell me of a time when you had two important and critical projects or assignments engaging your time. How did you handle and what happened in that scenario?	-Worked from home -Cannot take all calls in office -Comfortable environment made the work easier	-Prioritized -Less engagement with colleagues -Headaches -frustration	-Prioritized my tasks -Went out of comfort zone -Worked more than working hours. -stressed	-Worked in teams -Delegate each other -help out	-Support from colleagues -Time management	-Prioritization -Multitasking -Under pressure -Frustrated -Anger at others

Tell me about the challenges and difficulties one might face with a non-flexible working environment.	-Frustration -In balance in personal life -Less productivity at work performance	-Not feeling to work -Less productivity -No motivation	-Not meeting the deadline	-Stress full -Work not benefit -Families affected	-Students suffer -Quit -Stress -Health issues	-Companies collapsing
What's your opinion on being available to work at different times throughout the day, a week or even a month?	-Sometimes takes on your health -Hectic -Need management of time suitably -busy	-Time scheduled -Working will be hard -procrastination	-Not in favor of this idea -Sometimes to complete the project	-Prefer team work for this kind. -Routine -Disciple -Not affecting others	-Proper time not given -More load	-Job should be done -Office hours are good
What kinds of flexibility would be helpful to you in balancing your work and home life?	-Employer gives freedom -Work accordingly to employee's ability -No time or hours restrictions -Work according to your time to give time to family	-Less Working hours and days -Paid leaves	-Working from home -Compressed working hours -Friendly working environment -Emergency leaves	-Time out -Help from employer -Negotiation	-Flexible timings	-Compressed hours
In future how do you think an employee's performance and engagement in workplace can be improved?	- Constant know of employee's life. - Know the employees struggles and achievement - Focus on good strength. -value	-Motivation -Respect -Freedom of work	-Value to their works -Motivational activities -Respecting ideas -promotion	-Compromise with supervisors -leaders	-Boost up -Motivation -Good salary -Flexible environment.	-More meetings -Interactions -Rewards -Not being too strict -Bonuses -Flexible
Let's say you are being hired	- Not a morning person - 10 to 6 instead	-5 days a week -9 to 5	-Freedom to start work early or late	-More holidays -Shorter	-Prefer middle working shift	-Morning person -9 to 5

in a company, what would your ideal work schedule be like?	of 9 to 5		Freedom to work from anywhere	Fridays -Less Time restrictions	-Not a morning person	-Office environment -Physical presence
I have come to know that workplace flexibility has been a hot topic lately. How has your company responded to this discussion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work from home -Take company equipment's home -Allowances for good internet connection at home -Group conversations to discuss each other's lives. -Happy hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Valuing employees -Work from home -Respecting ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Very important -Discussion in every Internal quarterly meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Negotiation with individuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Flexible working hour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Negotiations -Encourage -Motivation -Flexibility

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