

Perceptions of Finnish female employees of a reduced working week

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<p>The purpose of this thesis is to review how Finnish employees find the current working culture, and it would be beneficial for all the stakeholders to reduce the working hours in order to achieve better results. Employees claim that the work-life is not balanced because of the 8-hour and 5-day working weeks and digitization, which can keep employees 24/7 reachable. As technology has improved our way of working dramatically, yet our working time has not changed at all from it.</p> <p>The thesis explores the effects of reduced working hours on employee's well-being, workplace quality, and motivation. This topic is currently discussed and argued within different individuals, companies, organizations, and even countries as a hot topic of future work culture.</p> <p>This thesis implemented a quantitative research method to clearly understand Finnish employees' current situation. A tailor-made survey collected the primary data to obtain more in-depth knowledge.</p> <p>As a result, Finnish female employees are curious about implementing reduced working hours in their personal life, and they think it could lead to better work performance. However, the way working time will be implemented in the future depends significantly on what technological developments will be discovered in the future and how it affects new ways of working.</p>	
Keywords Female employees, reduced working hours, work-life balance, employee engagement	

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1 Introduction

Let's be honest; the objectives started from a selfish reason. I wish I could live in a world that would not be that work-oriented or work-centered as it is right now. However, the question is not just about my choices or ways I want to live - Many employees are craving for a change as well, and the most critical ones are saying that capitalism is broken, and it will destroy us if we keep on going this direction.

As technology has given us plenty of advantages, it still has its own downside as well, such as being always reachable. As the work culture has changed so much around us, I wonder why the way we work has not changed with it.

Society is influenced by the economic climate, political situation, and the interpenetration of history, current situation, and predicting the future. Under these conditions, my research is challenging yet interesting, and it will go through ongoing concerns and debate of the reduced working hours.

From a historical perspective, people believed that a ten-hour and a six-day week was normal; now, it is the eight-hour and five-day workweek. Perhaps, soon we could implement the six-hour and four-day workweek and that to be the new normal.

Technological developments and the impact of globalization on work communities have taken workers in many industries into a twenty-four-hour work rhythm that makes it difficult to recover from. Many employers are expecting employees to be flexible, productive, time-efficient, creative, and of course, motivated by their work input. These expectations can bring pressure for the employee, and the current workweek hours can affect the employee's mental and physical condition, which can deeply spread into their leisure time. Perksbox 2020 UK workplace stress survey report poll results claimed that 79% of the poll takers experience work stress, and only 1% never experienced work-related stress. (Perksbox 2020)

And it does stop in there; Covid-19 also has lowered our well-being. According to a survey of nearly 1500 people from 46 countries majority of the replicants are struggling with workplace well-being during the pandemic. Employees feel overwhelmed, challenged with meeting basics needs, feeling of loneliness, and struggles with mental health, which correlates with burnout. The unpracticable future, fears, and lack of supportive community have impacted a feeling that people are not in control of their work and personal life. (Campbell M & Gavett G. 2021)

Finland's Prime Minister Sanna Marin put forth the idea of companies adopting a six-hour workday and a four-day workweek. Marin thinks that people deserve more time with their

families, friends, and hobbies and in their self-development. This raised many questions with the opposition, unions, and increased people to try implementing this and do more different types of studies and surveys regarding this topic all over the world. (Kelly J 2020)

Advertisement company Vapa media in Finland started an experiment of a 6-hour workday from January 2021. According to Vapamedia's Client Director and Team Lead, Karoliina Kontinen noticed that reduced worktime had shown need to be in advance and organized as the time is limited, it has helped them to have more structure and agenda on their workdays. Also, the atmosphere of the working environment has increased, collages are more generous and feeling of being well-rested and having more energy with kids. These outcomes have improved a general feeling of positivity. (Vapa media 2021)

Nearly seventy years ago, employers started to realize that employees' feelings, needs, goals, and hopes impact their performance. Employers can help employees achieve their job satisfaction, leading to employees' internal motivation drive, which will increase job performance.

Empowering employees is not a new concept which means that employees who have more control over where, when, and how their job is done feel more trusted and motivated. This is connected to commitment, creativity, productivity, and satisfaction.

A motivated workforce can only be beneficial for every industry. When employees are motivated, their productivity level rises, their absenteeism, and the turnover of staff members lowers—the improvement of relationship withing management and collages rises and also quality and productivity of work increases.

1.1 Aims and objectives of the study

Current work culture can be very oppressive with over hours, stress, and by having high expectations on employees' effectiveness and productivity. These previous claims can easily affect employees' occupational health. This study aims to find out how does Finnish employees perceive shorter working weeks, and it would resonate into better work-life balance. The research will be focused on female employees, as the current work culture can be often more beneficial for males.

This study will include recommendation and future development ideas for company owners, leaders, the human resources department, and for everyone who are interested in the change of current work culture.

1.2 Methodology

This study will include primary and secondary data to provide an overview of the current situation of this particular topic for this research. The theoretical background is based on secondary data, which relies heavily on existing literature, studies, scientific articles, electronic sources, and information by national institutes, organizations, researchers, and journalists to get an understanding of this particular topic.

A tailor-made survey for employees obtained the primary data because a quantitative method provides consistent, precise, and reliable data. The surveys' data was gathered by sending a form to employees who are working reduced working hours, employees who are interested in reduced working hours, and employees who are satisfied with the current situation of working hours.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

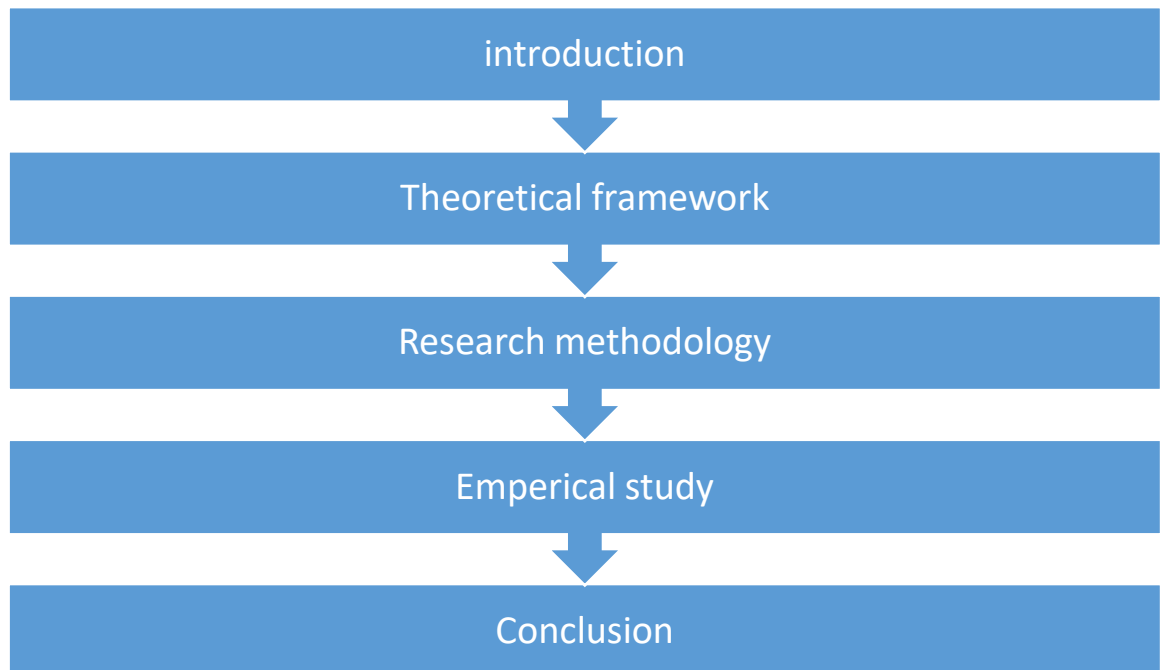


Figure 1 Summary of the structure

This study contains five different chapters, starting with introductions that explain the objectives, the purpose, the problem, and the structure of the thesis. It gives an understanding of how this thesis is framed into different chapters.

The second chapter is a theoretical framework that aims is to understand how Finnish employees perceive current working hours, how it impacts their workplace quality and could reduce working hours, and today's technology improve the current working culture.

The third chapter is about the research approach and methods. The research is a quantitative research method that was implemented by a tailor-made survey. This chapter will also present the data collection process and data analysis process.

The fourth chapter is the empirical part which presents the results and analyses the primary data. This part will give an overview of the study results and a deep analysis of the outcomes on how a shorter working week impacted female employees.

The final chapter is the conclusion of this thesis, and it will give recommendations and development ideas for company owners, directors, the human resource department, and for a person who is interested in new ways of working. Also, this chapter will bring out authors learning from this research.

2 Working time and employees' perceptions

This chapter's aim is to understand how Finnish employees perceive current working hours, how it impacts their workplace quality and could reduce working hours, and today's technology improve the current working culture.

2.1 Development of working time in Finland

More than a hundred years ago, Finland switched to an 8-hour working day, and the length was 47 hours. The next step was taken at the turn of the 1960's and 70's when the transition took place for a five-day and 40-hour workweek. After that, when it comes to this day, working hours have not been changed. The most significant reductions in working hours in Finland happened during the years from 1917 to 1992 when Epiphany and Ascension Day were converted back into public holidays. If the repayments made are spread evenly over the period, working time has shortened a half a percent proximately annually. (Kiander, J. 2017)

The early 1990's depression in Finland was one of the worst economic crises in Finland's history, even worse than the great depression in the 1930's. Because of the high unemployment figures, Finland needed to increase the employment rate, which led to the 6+6 model that some companies practiced. The idea of this model was that in exchange for 8-hour workdays, employees would work 6-hours in two turns. The experiment showed that working hours do affect employee's well-being, affectedness, and productivity. Most of the companies joined into 6+6 models experiment voluntarily and found positive results, as production times were extended, capital utilization become more efficient, and employees had shorter breaks because of the reduced working hours. Some of these companies avoided layoffs by sharing working hours. Even that the results were mainly positive, Finland did not continue the 6+6 model after the 1990's depression was over. (Anttila, T. 2005)

In Finland, the employment rates of women and men have long been quite close. According to statistics Finland's Labor Force Survey in 2019, the employment rate for men was 73,3 percentage, and for women, it was 71,8 percentage. This differs from many EU countries. In Finland, the employment rate of women aged 15 to 64 has long been considerably higher than the EU28 countries average. The employment rate for men has been relatively close to the EU28 countries average in 2019. Male employment average rate in EU28 countries was 74,4 percentages when female's average employment rate in EU28 countries was 64,1 percentages. (THL, 2020) According to the study that THL had in 2019 noticed that 22 percentage of Finnish female salary earners are working part-time, and the

most common reason for part-time work was the lack of full-time position. For Finnish male salary earners, only ten percent is working part-time, and the most common reason for part-time job was that male is studying a degree. Almost all of those working part-time for the care of children or relatives were women. (THL, 2020)

In 2018, 70 percent of those employed had regular working hours of 35-40 hours per week. Eleven percent worked more than 40-hour weeks, and 19 percent regularly worked less than 35-hours a week. Furthermore, in 2018 the annual working hours of salary earners were 1485 hours for women and 1699 hours for men. The differences in working hours are affected by the larger share of part-time employment in women, as well family leave is still used mainly by women, which reduces women's working hours. (Ti-lastokeskus, 2019) Nonetheless, nowadays Finland's working hours do not differ much from the other European countries. Only France has changed their working hours since 2000 into 35-hour working week. Shorter working hours have raised lots of discussions, especially in the past decade with many different countries, public sectors, and also private sectors. Like in Finland, Minister of Transport and Communications Sanna Marin (current prime minister) raised the idea of shorter working hours at the SDP's 120th anniversary in August 2019. In her keynote speech, Marin proposed a shorter working week to be included on the SDP's agenda. She believes that people deserve more time with their loved ones, hobbies, and civilization. (Ijäs, J. 2019)

2.2 Workplace quality and motivation

Today's companies are more aware of the impact of employees' motivation, and they want to increase the understanding by making different types of strategies on employee motivation. Motivation comes in different shapes for different people. However, usually the key is the same: feeling of importance. People need a reason for their doings; otherwise, it might feel pointless, which correlates with the lack of motivation. In order to increase employee level of motivation is essential to understand employees' needs and to use the correct motivation method. Even a small encouragement can lead to significant action for the employee. When or if the employee has been ignored or discounted on their employee motivation, it easily leads to disengagement, which might even leave them to quit. Managers and other employers might find themselves often trying to fill the same positions if they keep neglecting employees' needs. (Schindler, J. 2019)

People have different types and levels of motives, which leads into two categories of motivation; Intrinsic (internal) and extrinsic (external).

Intrinsic motivation/factor

Intrinsic motivation is driven by interest. This is a genuine activity, gives meaningful and curiosity to learn more. These are some things where a person does not get the pressure of the time what has been used or money what has been spending. The individual will do this without recognition because it's a desire, passion, and even love which gives meaning and belongingness for making it. (Ryan R. M. & Deci E. L2000) This is often seen in with such as doctors, artists & athletes.

Extrinsic motivation/factor

Extrinsic motivation is driven by reward. These actions are coming from outside of an individual, and the action of performing is happening to receive positive feedback, get recognition, and/or be rewarded. Also, there is a chance that these performances are made because of the fear of punishment or failure. (Ryan R. M. & Deci E. L2000)

This is something that a person would not do if the reward would be removed.

There are five factors that affect the quality of the workplace: the social environment of work, job flexibility, work intensity, and work opportunities for development and influence at work. The quality of jobs also has an impact on gender equality. (Nevalainen, S. 2020) These elements correlate straight into work motivation.

Finnish Statistics research on working conditions 2018 shows that women work, on average, in lower-quality jobs than men. (Tilastokeskus, 2018) In the classification, the social environment of work refers to the relationship between co-workers and supervisors, and management. Receiving appreciation from the community and experiences of harassment and bullying have a big impact on the social work environment. Many companies have sharpened their plan to include equality, diversity, and accessibility into better attention. Harassment can come in many different layers, as individuals perceive different experiences differently. According to the Equality Barometer 2017, 39 percent of women in Finland and 17 percent of men in Finland had experienced sexual harassment in the past two years. (THL, 2020)

On the other hand, job flexibility concerns opportunities to influence one's own working hours. Employee empowerment builds a greater trust relationship, such as by proving certain autonomy and control in employee's day-to-day activities. Autonomy can be seen as an employee can decide where, when, and how they work as long the job is completed. When empowerment is well adopted, employees feel more valuable. This correlates them to be satisfied, effective, efficient to their job, and again it raises better relationship with the organization. (Demirci, K., Erbas, A. 2010)

Work intensity describes hurry and mental strain at work. The physical workload includes noise, heavy lifting, the risk of infectious diseases, the risk of stress injuries and accidents, and physical workload.

Work opportunities for development and influence at work means the possibility to develop at work, perceive appreciation of own professional skills, and opportunity to decide employees own work tasks. Employees most likely are more motivated when they get feedback on their job, giving meaning and space for development. According to Gallup's research, 26% of employees strongly agree that the feedback they receive helps them do their work better. (Wigert, B., Harted, J. 2017) Most companies give employee feedback annually, which makes it hard to evaluate such a long period frequently. Timely feedback is likely to be powerful, positive, and effective, while delayed feedback seems more like criticism of past mistakes. (However, the majority receive feedback once a year or even less. (Wigert, B., Harted, J. 2017)) Employee recognition is one of the key elements for increasing employee motivation. Recognition for employees can lead to a much better state of mind and positively impact their work-life. (Forbes 2020)

According to the Finnish Statistics research on working conditions, 2018 in Finland, 35 percent of employees feel that they are satisfied with their workplace quality. Yet, 60 percent of the respondents were male. The other 18 percent of the respondent are eligible with their workplace quality. They felt that work atmospheres are good, work is motivating, and it does not give much stress. The respondents were mainly young people in the early stages of their careers. Then the other 17 percentage felt that workplace quality was ruined because of the rush. 56 percent of the respondents were women who felt that work caused stress and mental strain. Then 11 percent of the respondents felt that their development opportunities were small and the work atmosphere is lacking. 57 percent of the respondents were women. Lastly, the rest 20 percent of the respondents feel that their workplace quality is lacking in every sector. 56 percent of the respondents were female who experienced the work communities' support was weak. The Finnish Statistics research shows 59 percent of male employees are satisfied with their workplace quality when only 46 percent of females are. (Nevalainen, S. 2020) Shorter working hours supporters mean to increase productivity and gender equality, improve mental health and fight for the climate change. This proposal has taken a stronger significance as the pandemic of Covid-19 sharpens issues around well-being, burnout, and work-life balance. (Kassam, A. 2021)

2.3 Effects of reduced working hours

The impacts of reduced working hours are impressive for an individual employee but also for the environment. Shorter working weeks would balance the cap between the working

hours and free time so employees would have more time to spend with their loved ones, hobbies, or however they would like to spend it.

Nowadays is sadly common to feel overwhelmed by work, having work-related stress, and even burnout which can easily lead to depression. Getting sick because of work correlates with long working hours and the imbalance of work-life and free time.

When individuals' mental and physical health are doing well, and they feel well-rested, it affects straight into better work performance, and it increases productivity.

Domestic responsibilities are easier to combine with shorter working weeks which increases the gender equity. As women are using most of the family leaves, it leaves men more time to take care of their families, which can give better opportunities for women to reengage with the work market. It could also affect the salary cap and working hour caps between men and women. (Coote, A., Harper, A. 2020) Moreover, it raises a better lifestyle, as people could have more time to prepare meals out of fresh ingredients rather than buying energy-intensive ready meals. Shorten working weeks seems to improve also individual's relationship with their social circle, by having a better connection with friends and taking care of the elderly.

Shorter working weeks can often be seen as improving employees' satisfaction, productivity, motivation, and even into companies' loyalty.

Reducing working hours into a 6-hour workday could impact employees into a more sustainable lifestyle, for example, cycling and walking to work instead of driving. And if workweeks would end on Thursdays so that Fridays would be off, it would mean 20 percent of the week's capacity. The effect of carless Fridays would have a massive impact on CO2 emissions. (Peeples, L. 2009) City's and countries with reduced working hours most likely have a smaller carbon footprint, as companies do not need to commute as many large office buildings as they are not in use that much.

Money cannot buy happiness – yet, poverty really affects meeting with basic needs. Study shows that more income is linked with emotional well-being, but only up to some point.

Thus, if working time is reduced from 7,5 hours to six hours, it shortens 7,5 hours per week. That means about 20 percent of working time. If an employee's salary is cut 50 percent of the value of the reduced period, whose salary is 2000€ a month, it would be reduced by 10 percent, i.e., 200€ per month. Some argue that the price of reduced working hours is too high; others think it is worth it and that money cannot buy time. (Apunen, M. 2017)

The biggest concern for both parties, employer, and employee is the money. Often companies find these experiments too risky, as the hourly paid rises nearly 20 percent. For employees' point of view is excellent, as they get the same money and more time, so it affects their work motivation. On the other hand, If the working hours and salary would reduce by 20 percent, it leaves fewer risks for the employer. However, this option can lead the employee into a difficult situation money vice, which can escalate for the employee to get another part-time position from another company.

What many are arguing is that productivity would increase so much that it is possible to reduce the working hours and not the salary as the results for the company would be better than before. Study shows that more income is linked with emotional well-being, but only up to some point. When a person's salary is about \$6000 a month, no happiness gains from the income. (Kahneman, D., Deaton, A. 2010) Would it be more beneficial for a high and middle class to shorten working hours than for a low-income employee?

It is still an understandable concern what companies are having, as many think that the results of the starting peak would not last long term. States, cities, companies, and even countries across the world are more willing to challenge today's working hours by giving a foundation for these experiments.

Earlier this year, the Spanish government announced that they would try the leftwing party's Más País proposal for a four-day workweek. According to its proposal, compensation paid by the state would allow companies to participate in the experiment with the least possible financial risk. Más País has estimated that about 200 companies and 3000 to 6000 employees would participate in the experiment. (Kassam, A. 2021) Gothenburg, Sweden, had a two-year trial, and according to the leader of the left party, Daniel Bernmar, the experiment was showing that employees are happier, healthier, and more productive. Gothenburg's trial argues that could employee's well-being overcome the cost in the long run. (Alderman, L. 2017) Several other countries worldwide, such as Germany, New Zealand, Japan, and the UK, have been talking about the reduced working hours.

Nevertheless, it is not said that reduced working hours would be an optimal way of working for every field, nor it cannot be assumed that the unemployed experience is what the employer is looking for.

According to Etila's report (Kauhanen, A., Lehmus, M. 2019), reducing working hours or dividing the work into smaller parts would not work as desired. The possible effects of extending or reducing working hours on employment depend on how these changes affect labor costs, labor productivity, and the profitability of employment. If monthly wages are kept the same when working hours are reduced, study shows that fewer jobs are created,

and more are lost. Furthermore, they argue that reducing working hours can be beneficial only if the monthly salary is also reduced.

According to employees' estimates, as working hours were reduced, work becomes more intensive. For individuals, reduced working hours also meant a change in the time structure that affects everyday life. A six-hour workday instead of the previous eight-hour provides two hours of additional free time. When synchronizing employees' own time with communal time, the content of the free time is more valuable than the amount of free time. (Anttila, T. 2017)

Shorter working hours could also negatively affect the restaurant industry, as employees would not use as much for breakfast, lunch, or coffee breaks during the working hours.

2.4 The impact of technology on working hours

According to Finnish Statistics research on working conditions 2018, 90 percentage of Finnish employees use digital applications in their work. Nonetheless, the use of digital devices, employees' digital skills, and the perceived effect of job digitization on the workplace are uneven. (Tilastokeskus, 2018) Just over a third (35%) of those who use digital devices and applications felt that the digitalization of work had increased the workload, but one in six (17%) felt that the workload had rather decreased. More than half felt that digitalization had increased work efficiency, speed, and transparency. More than a third (36%) thought that the opportunity to use creativity at work had improved. Women felt that digitalization increased the workload and speed of work more often than men.

In contrast, men felt that it increased the efficiency of work and the ability to use creativity at work more generally than women. Of all wage earners, 5 percent only respond that digitalization has an impact on their workplace employment within the past three years. On the other hand, 6 percent said the number of people in the workplace had increased because of digitalization and or robotics. (Tilastokeskus, 2018)

Technology has made a massive impact in the past 20 years in every one's lives. There are many different ways to work nowadays because of what technology has provided us, and these elements have really sharpened due to the Covid-19. The ease of working remotely, communication, and collaborating within the team has changed rapidly. Even that it shows positive impacts, there is also a problem that technology allows us to be available 24-hours a day. This can lead to job insensitivity and tightening the pace of work what can even make employees suffer from burnout.

Some companies are trying to find a solution, how to take advantage today's technology for better benefits of human well-being. Such as Unilever, which started a four-day week

trial in New Zealand from November 2020 until December 2021, affecting the whole office, including 81 employees. The employees would be paid for five days while working just four. After 12 months, Unilever will assess the outcomes and see how they could implement them globally. Unilever will introduce new project management software to cut down on unnecessary tasks and support faster decision-making. The company will evaluate the trial outcomes with Sydney's University of Technology and see how they could implement the reduced working hours into the rest of its 155000 employees globally. (Inman, P. 2021) Unilever is an exemplary company showing how to use today's autonomy and digitization knowledge to reduce working.

3 Research approach and methods

This chapter explains what methods were used in collecting and analyzing data for this study. Thus, it gives an explanation for its research validity and reliability and what the limitations were during the process.

Research refers to a search for knowledge. It gives a deep analysis of the topic, and it unknowns the subject for a fuller understanding. The aim of the research is to solve a problem by using scientific methods to provide new information. (Kothari, C. 1985)

3.1 Research Methods

Research can be divided into two different categories, applied vs. fundamental. Applied research is designed to answer particular questions, solving the actual problem. When fundamental research is more expanding the knowledge by answering into why what or how questions. (Kothari, C. 1985)

Conceptual research is related to abstract ideas or theories, which philosophers often use to develop a new approach or make an impact on existing theory. When empirical research focuses on experience or observation alone, without a theory. It relies heavily on data-based information and finds a result for its problem. (Kothari, C. 1985)

The Quantitative research method is based on the amount by measuring the quantity. (Kothari, C. 1985) It gives an accurate large overall picture of the phenome. When qualitative research is based on the quality aspect. (Kothari, C. 1985) Qualitative research is often used by having interviews as it then is possible to analyze and investigate individuals' habits.

This research is conducted by using a quantitative research approach, as it gives the opportunity to answer the survey anonymously for its sensitive topic regarding work well-being and possible wishes for shorter working hours. Thus, it adds a better possibility to get a more considerable amount of replicants as it is more time-efficient.

3.2 Data collection process

Data collection is mandatory for research to get accurate information. This research includes primary data and secondary data. In the beginning, secondary data was collected by using existing literature, studies, scientific articles, electronic sources, and information by national institutes, organizations, researchers, and journalists to gain a deep understanding of how shorter working weeks impact employees' motivation.

In parallel, the primary data was obtained by a tailor-made electric survey. The questionnaires were created by using secondary data's collection of the theoretical research. Survey questions were used to research how reduced working hours impact employees' motivation positively and negatively. The questions can be divided into four categories: First basic questions, which include gender, age, area, educational level, current working situation, and work experience. The second well-being question contains how employees are feeling about their work-life balance to their free time. Thirdly motivational questions, to find out positive and negative impacts regarding their work. Lastly, reduced working hour questions, including that could employees be happier with shorter working hours and how about when it affects their salary. For the entire questionnaire, see appendix 1.

3.3 Data Analysis Process

After the data collection process is completed, data has been analyzed by using a quantitative approach. The survey results were systematized and converted into percentages, charts, and table illustrations to clarify the analysis process and comparison.

The primary data collection process happened for one week, from 5th April until 11th April 2021. The surveys data was gathered by sending it to employees on different social media platforms. Also, individually to employees who are working reduced working hours, employees who are interested in reduced working hours, and employees who are satisfied with the current situation of working hours to get an as possibly large sampling of the on-going case.

3.4 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are essential characteristics of a credible study, as in research are crucial to creating valid and reliable results. This is more persistent in quantitative research as, in this case, the online survey is not monitored for pretentious replicants. However, it can be very problematic in qualitative research. How trustworthy the results can be and have the replicant has been manipulated or rewarded to answer some specific way. (Hammersley, M. 1987) In this study, the reliability of research has been taken into consideration in its overall structure.

This research provides steps that can ensure outcomes for research questions (RQ) and investigative questions (IQ's). In this research, survey results were collected individually and anonymously, within all 105 respondents, when 70 respondents were female, so the obtained data can be considered reliable. The survey questions can be found under Appendix 1.

View to the secondary data used in this study can provide reliable information, which increases the credibility because of the showing sources that have been used in this research. Secondary data was collected using existing literature, studies, scientific articles, electronic sources, and information by national institutes, organizations, researchers, and journalists, which can be found under References.

Nevertheless, the global pandemic of Covid-19 had its impact on this study. As most of the employees work remotely, it is harder to get an entire office to answer the survey. Also, unfortunately, some companies had to close their daily operations and terminate contractions, and give lay off's which leaves many unemployed individuals not that keen to respond to work motivational related surveys.

Due to the limited time and resources, it would be more beneficial to continue the survey for a more extended period, to get more replicants. Additionally, it would be interesting to conduct interviews also into this study to get a closer understanding of employees' appearance.

4 Results and analysis

The research aims to reveal how Finnish female employees perceive shorter working weeks, and there could be a link to their motivation and well-being. The survey acquired 70 Finnish female respondents. This chapter aims to focus on analysing the survey data and discuss the findings with illustrations of tables and charts.

4.1 General Questions

The objectives of the general question's part are to get an understanding of who the respondents of the survey are. The general questions about gender, age, working situation, current working field, working hours, and gross salary were asked to get the overall picture of their current situation. The results of the background questions were illustrated in figure 2, figure 3, and figure 4.

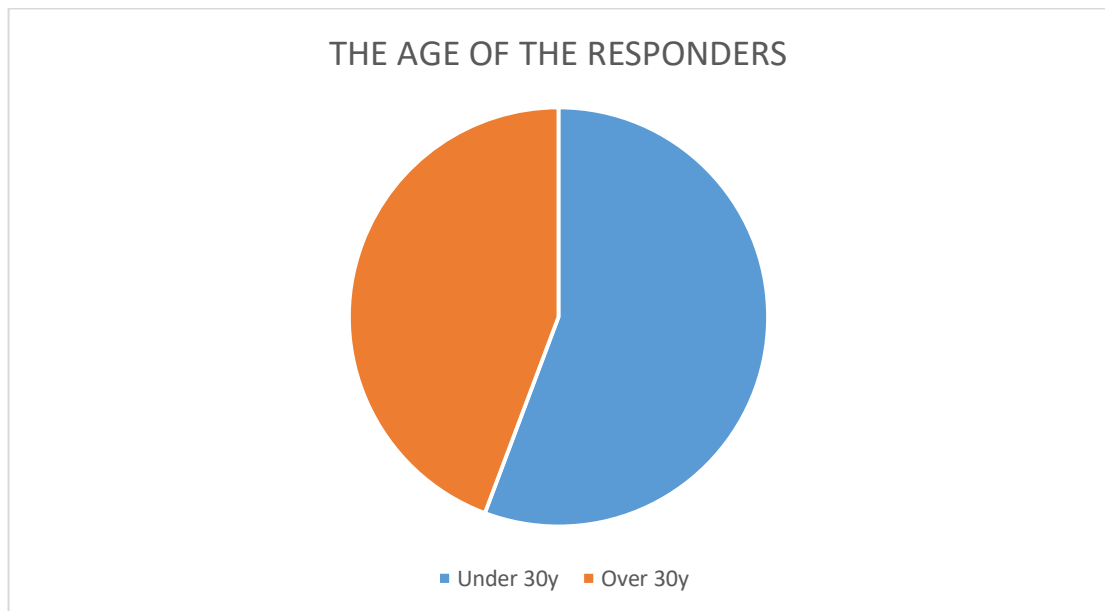


Figure 2 The age difference between responders

The survey had 70 female responders, where 56 percent are under 30 years, and the rest, 44 percent, are over 30 years. The age difference gives valuable information for the future comparisons between the results, that do Finnish females under 30 years perceive reduced working hours differently than Finnish females over 30 years. The survey also discovered that 64 percent of the responders are working full-time, 29 percentage are working part-time, and seven percent are not currently working. By 79 percent of the responders work one-shift work when 17 percent are working two-shift work, and only 4 percent are working three-shift work.

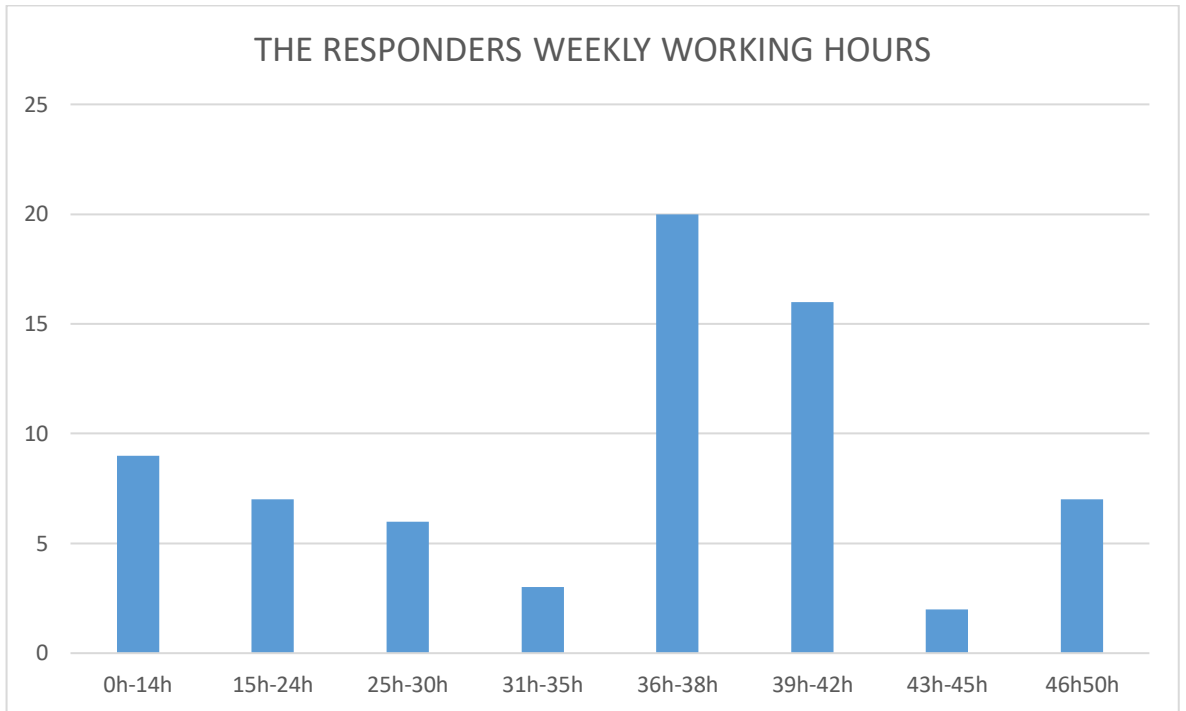


Figure 3 Weekly working hour difference between the responders

The figure 3 chart demonstrates the working hour's difference between all the responders. There was no full-time worker who would identify themselves working under 30 hours a week, which means that responders who are working between 0 hours to 30 hours are part-time workers or currently unemployed.

There was 0 percent of full-time workers who are working 0 hours to 30 hours a week, 5 percentage are working 31 hours to 35 hours, 44 percentages are working 36 hours to 38 hours, 33 percentage are working 39 hours to 42 hours, 2 percentages are working 43 hours to 45 hours, and 16 percentages are working 46 to 50 hours a week.

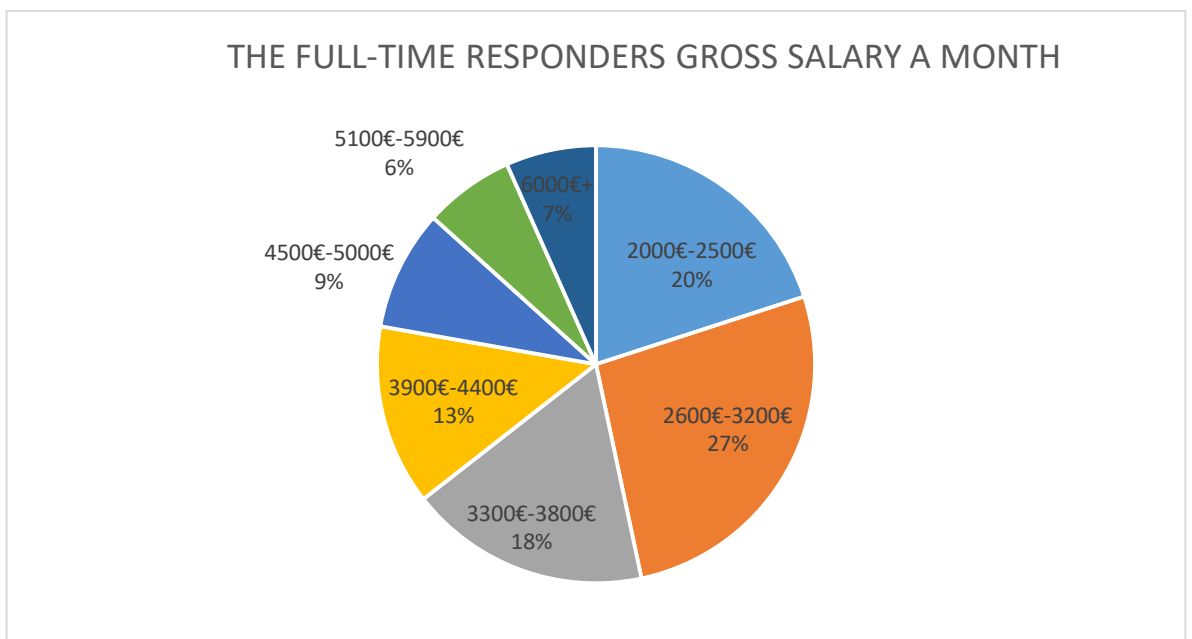


Figure 4 Full-time responders gross salary difference

There is a large range of different gross salaries between the Finnish female full-time workers (figure 4). It shows the average gross salary is between 2000€ to 3800€ a month. 13 percentages gross salary is 3900€ to 4400€, 9 percentages gross salary is 4500€ to 5000€ and 6 percentages gross salary is 5100€ to 5900€ and 7 percentage gross salary is more than 6000€ a month.

4.2 Work motivation factors

The survey follows with the work motivation questions to understand what the respondents consider to be important and the key elements for work motivation. The work motivation questions about financial benefits, work-life balance, promotion opportunities, recognition, organization culture, tasks clarity, personal growth, and empowerment. The respondent had to answer from one = disagree completely to five = agree completely to understand what affects most into employees work motivation.

These results are compared within the age groups of female employees under 30 and over 30 years. The results are illustrated in figure 5.

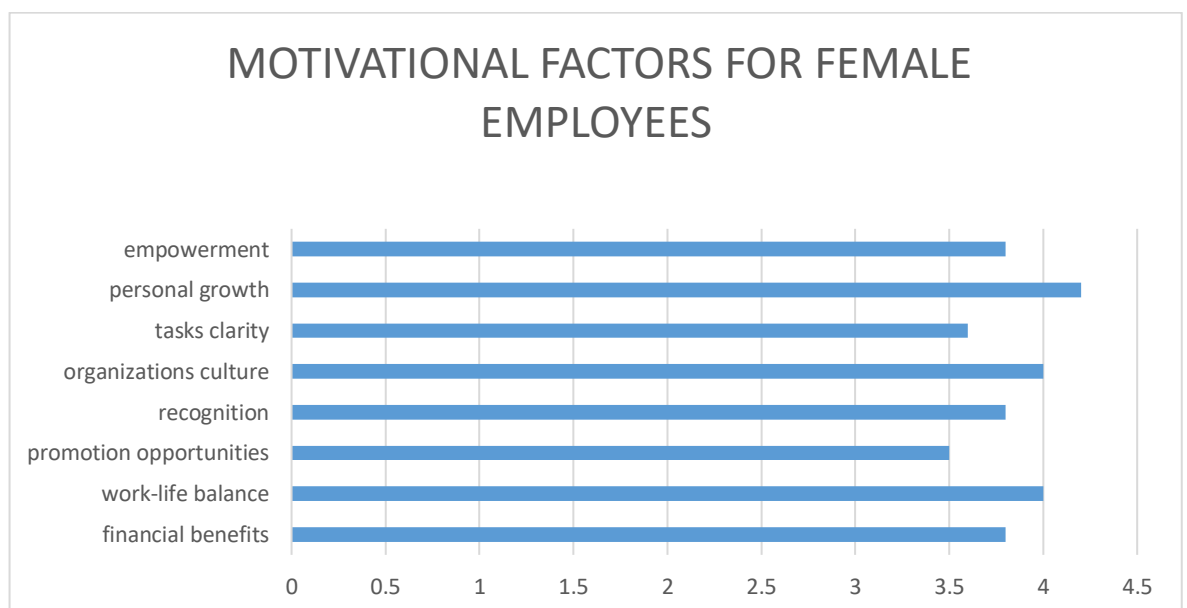


Figure 5 Motivational factors

Among the eight options, the respondents find personal growth ranked first by 4,2 points on a scale of 1 to 5. This is accurate when comparing to the theoretical part of this research, where intrinsic motivation and work opportunities for development play a significant role in employee motivation. Personal growth is a process where the employee has a need to fulfill their knowledge and use their full potential. In some cases, it can also mean a salary increase. However, this activity is genuine; it gives meaning and curiosity to learn more. Employees with a high level of personal growth are motivated, enthusiastic and ambitious. They put more effort into accomplishing their work and producing the best quality

of work. Personal growth had a higher impact on females over 30 years with results of 4.3 than females under 30 years with results of 4.1. The difference within the age groups could be affected by respondents under 30 years, who most likely are in the early stages of their careers when respondents over 30 years already have more experience in their work field. This can lead to understanding for what are the perceived needs of personal growth and how to use the current potential for a better work result.

Work-life balance and organization culture stood second by both having 4 points. The meaning of work-life balance is to have balance with your personal life and career work. Current work culture can be seen that the balance is uneven, and people need more time for leisure. When people don't get enough time to recover from work, it can start to show work stress, work intensity, and even burnout. If people would have a better balance with their personal life and career, it could show better well-being within every aspect. The difference within age groups was that respondents under 30 years find more meaningful for the work-life balance by point 4.1 than respondents over 30 years by point 3.9. Even that the difference is narrow, it can still show that the younger generation values more work-life balance than the older generation.

The organization's culture had a significant impact on employees' motivation factors by having 4 points on a scale of 1 to 5. The organization's culture can be seen as the values of the workplace, how employees perceive their relationship with co-workers, supervisor, management, and owners. Also, are employees been appreciated, harassed, or bullied? These factors are playing a big role in employees' mindset of good work culture. According to the theoretical part of this thesis, women work more often in a lower quality of workplaces than men. This has also been reflected in many companies taking better care of their workplace equality. There was no difference within the age groups, so women under and over 30 years value companies' culture as much.

Finnish women respondents gave the same value for financial benefits, recognition, and empowerment by giving 3.8 points on a scale of 1 to 5, what can be seen in figure 6.

Financial benefits are part of the extrinsic factors, and in this situation, the reward is money. Having a steady income helps the employee to ensure their financial situation, which leads to a better impact of meeting basic needs. Women under 30 years value financial benefits more by having 3.9 points than women over 30 years by having 3.6 points. This can mean that respondents under 30 are at the start of their careers, and that is why they value financial benefits more than respondents age over 30.

Extrinsic factors are also including recognition. This means receiving positive feedback and appreciation. According to the theoretical part, employees are more motivated when they get feedback on their work, it gives them meaning, affecting them to meet up with their personal growth. All-female respondents valued this with 3.8 points on a scale of 1 to 5.

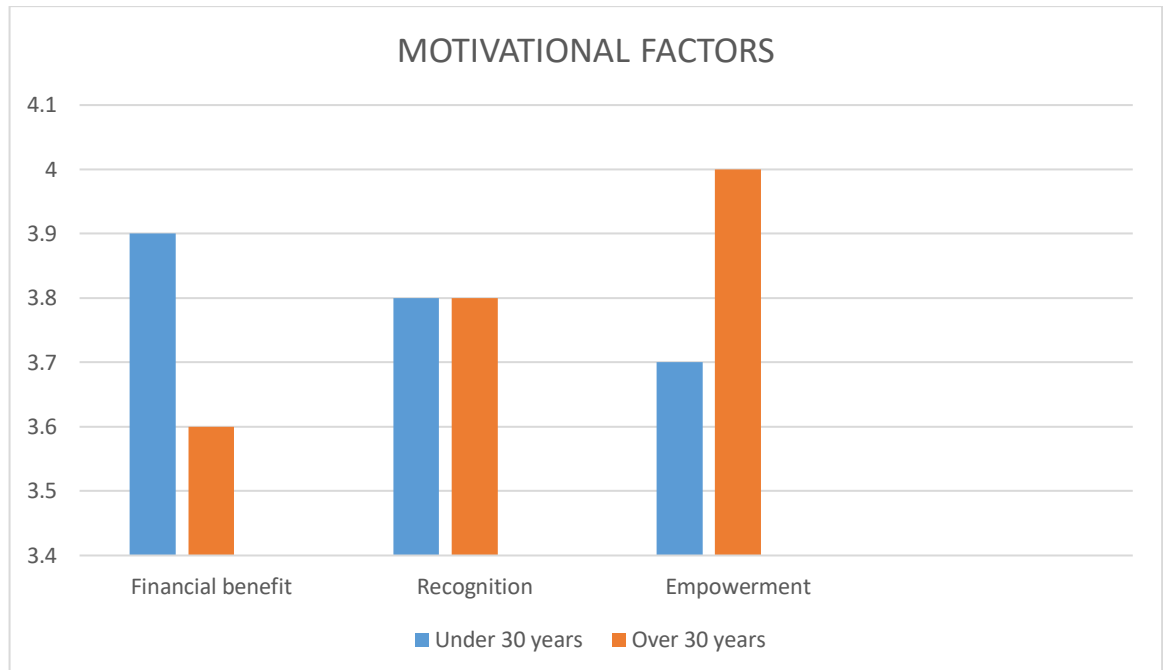


Figure 6 Motivational factors of finance, recognition and empowerment

Respondents over 30 years valued employee empowerment with point 4 when respondents under 30 years valued 3.7. This difference could be seen again that respondents under 30 are most likely at the start of their careers when older respondents have more experience, leading to more empowerment. Empowerment can be seen as having a better trust relationship within the leader and team members, which can lead to better job performance. (Lee, A. Willis, S. Wei Tian, A. 2018)

Respondents valued task clarity with 3.6 points on a scale of 1 to 5. When an employee has a clear role and task clarity, they understand exactly that is expected of them in their job. They know what tasks are supposed to accomplish and their goals and expectations. When clarity is lacking, it can lead to poor engagement and productivity. (Klemp, N.) Women under 30 years valued task clarity by 3.8 when women over 30 by 3.5.

3.5 points valued promotion opportunities among the women respondents. Promotion opportunities can usually be understood as another job position with a higher salary, which usually comes with a higher job title and more responsibilities. Promotion opportunities are not showing a significant interest within these respondents, as women under the age of 30

scored promotion opportunities by 3.6 when women over the age of 30 scored by 3.3 points.

4.3 Effect of reduced working hours

The survey continues with the reduced working hours questions to get in-depth information about what females employees think of shorter working hours. The respondent had to answer from one = disagree completely to five = agree completely, to get a better understanding of what is the factor that affects the most female employees to perceive shorter working hours. These questions were divided into eleven questions, and the results are illustrated in figure 6, figure 7, and figure 8. Results are compared with female respondents under the age of 30 and female respondents over the age of 30.

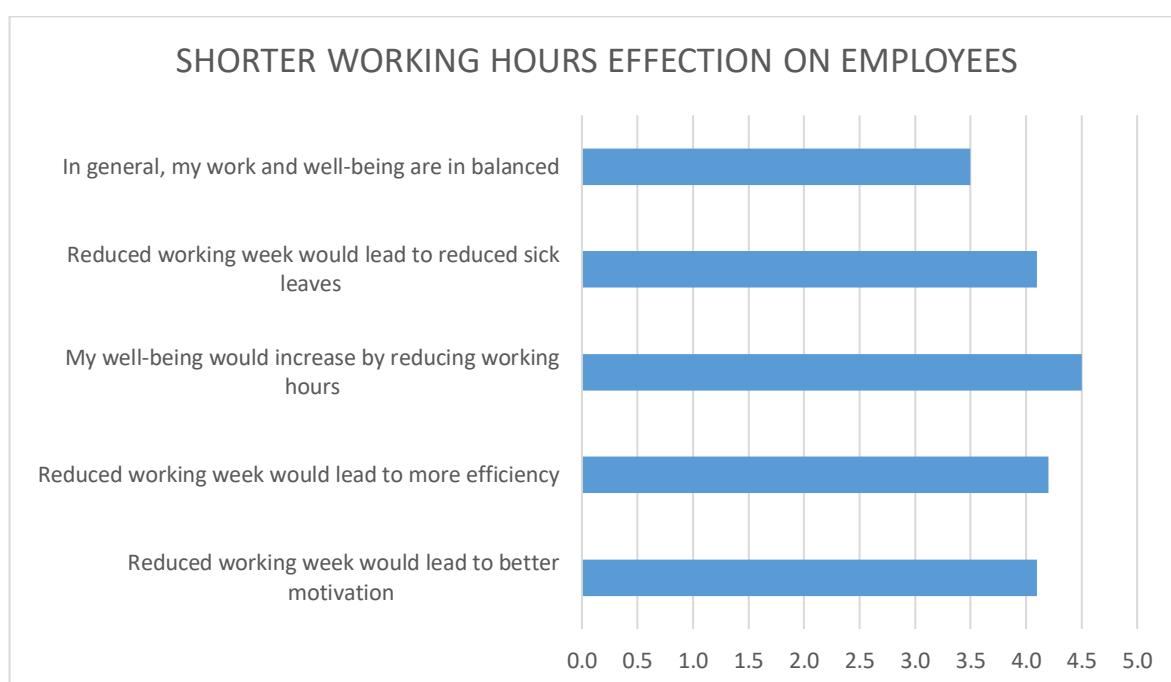


Figure 7 Reduced working hours effect on employees

Women of both age groups respondents think that there is room for an improvement what comes to their work-life being balance, they believe that reducing working hours will improve their well-being and reduce possible sick leaves from work. They also think that motivation and efficiency would increase by reducing working hours. No wonder the respondents have these expectations. According to working-life researcher Timo Anttila's findings, motivation would indeed increase and lead to better performance if working hours are reduced. (Anttila, T. 2005)

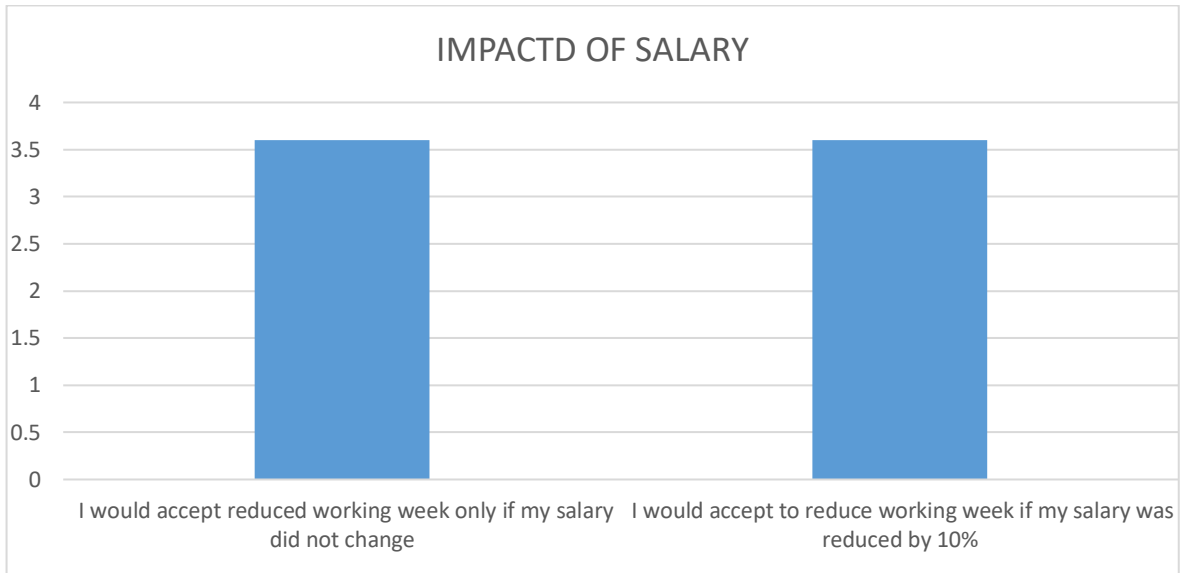


Figure 8 How employee perceive salary differences

These results are showing that steady income does matter for Finnish female employees. Respondents who earn between 3300€ to over 6000+€ a month are less hesitant to accept reduced working weeks if their salary would reduce 10% by scores 3.9. Then respondents who earn between 1000€ to 3200€ scored 3.4 points.

The results about “I would accept reduced working week only if my salary did not change” were very surprising as the average results scored 3.6 points. Respondents who earn between 1000€ to 3200€ scored 3.5, and respondents who earn between 3300€ to over 6000+€ scored 3.7.

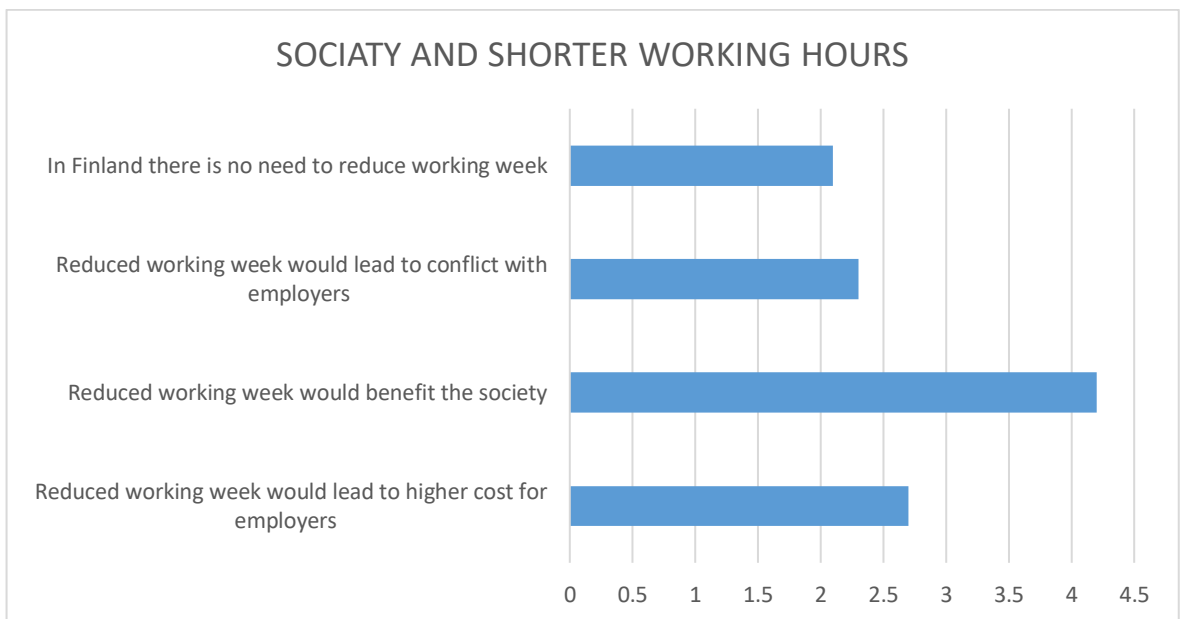


Figure 9 How shorter working week could affect society

As the chart shows (Figure 8), respondents do not think that shortening working hours could negatively impact employers, and compared to previous results, the outcome could only increase the benefits for company owners.

According to Sweden's left party leader Daniel Bernmar, employee's well-being would increase that much that the society would benefit from the results in the long run. (Alderman, L. 2017) These impacts could affect people for a healthier lifestyle, better gender equality, and less CO2 emissions. (Peeples, L. 2009) These results could have an effective change for the future.

Most Finnish female employees think that Finland needs to change the current working culture for lesser hours. These results were quite clear, as this topic has been so much on the table for the past decade. People generally feel that their work-life balance could be better, and reducing working hours and it could make the balance even.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter concludes the research with a summary of the study's findings. It follows with the conclusion of this study (5.1), recommendation (5.2), directions for further studies (5.3), and the researcher's learnings (5.4).

5.1 Conclusions

This research was done to find how Finnish female employees perceive reduced working hours and how it impacts their motivation. This study has investigated 70 Finnish females average age of 30, where the majority is working one shift in a full-time contract. The survey respondent aimed to get a deeper understanding of how reduced working hours influence employee motivation and the benefits of shorter working weeks.

This research question can be further divided into two investigative questions.

- Does reduced working hours influence employee motivation?
- What would be the benefits of shorter working weeks?

Reduced working hours offer a large number of benefits for all stakeholders, including company owners, managers, and employees. The results are showing that employees' motivation is influenced by many different aspects, such as financial benefits, work-life balance, promotion opportunities, recognition, organization culture, task clarity, personal growth, and empowerment. These motivational factors are playing a high role in the survey results as the average results were four on a scale from one to five. As the primary and secondary data is showing, motivation has a great impact on employees' work quality results. As motivation correlates strongly within the reduced working hours, such as employees' according to the primary and secondary data would work more efficiently, employee's well-being would increase and reduced sick leaves. Employees are valuing more their free time and health than their salary. The results are showing that even that financial benefits are offering a high impact on employees' motivation, the respondents will not mind reducing their monthly salary if they get reduced working hours.

These findings are giving companies' HR and management departments a possibility to discuss and change the working habits, as it becomes vital to find a sustainable change for work life balance. In conclusion, this increases motivation, trust, and employee engagement, by leading to better performance for the business and employees.

5.2 Recommendations

Employees are indeed ready to contribute to try reduced working hours, and they feel that the outcomes could be beneficial for all parties. Since providing the primely data, allows the researcher to make recommendation for companies to introduce reduced working hours into usage.

Recommendation for companies to try reduced working hours:

1. Employees think that their work-life is not in balance, and according to the primary and secondary data, the more satisfied employees are with their well-being the better they perform. Personal life reflects into their professional life as well. When employees get a better work-life balance, it correlates with their work motivation, leading to better job performance.
2. The results indicate that most participants would be interested in implementing reduced working hours without reducing their salary or reducing their salary by ten percent of their gross salary. This makes the trial easier to implement for the company owners, as it would not be that risky.
3. Employees feel that personal growth has a significant impact on their professional life, which can greatly affect their self-development. Adding feedback and recognition could lead to a big difference in job performance as well.
4. Giving a trial of reduced working hours can only show how the company will adapt to the new working culture. Short period trials will most definitely impact in a positive matter, so the suggestion is to give six months period trial at least to investigate how employees' job performance would change.
5. Reducing working hours, reducing CO2 emission, and changing the work culture would make a difference in global warming.

5.3 Direction for further study

It is recommended that further studies should take other particular sectors of a population into concertation. It could be beneficial to have studies of different genders, ages, location differences between cities, towns, and countries, educational level, occupation, position, political opinion, and even religion. This study focuses on females in Finland, where 80 percentages of the respondents were between 25 years to 34 years, and the majority was working full-time with one shift. Therefore, it would be beneficial for future studies to find leads for other demographic results and compare them.

Additionally, it would be ideal for comparing ongoing companies' trials between cities, continents, and countries. As well as to see how digitalization could affect reducing working hours and what are the long-term results.

5.4 Authors personal evaluation

Conducting this research helped the author understand the current work culture, motivational reasons, how people perceive the current way, and what their thoughts are about reducing working weeks. Choosing the subject was clear for the author as she has noticed that employees most likely are not working 8-hours effectively. Hence, it raised her interest to get a deeper knowledge of what work culture could be, how different companies or cities have perceived the reduced working trials and how it could affect if employees would work slightly less. As the topic has been getting a lot of attention in the past five years, the author has been following the subject intensively and will continue to gain more details regarding this topic.

The author's biggest personal challenge was making the theoretical section continuous. As the research questions changed during the thesis journey, keeping the theoretical part clear was challenging. Other than that, it was relatively easy to find academic studies, trustworthy sources, and reliable information.

At times it was challenging to schedule the study with other ongoing projects and how pandemic affected the author's mindsets on time. The author personally would have liked to finish the thesis a few months earlier than it did, but due to Covid-19, working from home and having other projects did not make it possible. However, the author sees the thesis project as great learning, and it has sharpened her work interest for the future.

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Appendices

How Employees' Perceive Reduced Working Weeks in Finland

1. Gender? *

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Rather not say

2. Age? *

- 18y-24y
- 25y-29y
- 30y-34y
- 35y-39y
- 40y-44y
- 45y-49y
- 50y-60y
- 61y+

3. Working? *

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Not working

4. Current working field?

5. What shifts do you work? *

- One-shift
- Two-shift
- Three-shift

6. How many hours do you work per week? *

- 0h-14h
- 15h-24h
- 25h-30h
- 31h-35h
- 36h-38h
- 39h-42h
- 43h-45h
- 46h-50h
- 51h+

7. What is your gross salary?

- 1000€-1900€
- 2000€-2500€
- 2600€-3200€
- 3300€-3800€
- 3900€-4400€
- 4500€-5000€
- 5100€-5900€
- 6000€+

How Employees' Perceive Reduced Working Weeks in Finland

8. What motivates you the most at work?

1=Disagree 5=Agree completely *

	1	2	3	4	5
Financial benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work-life balance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promotion opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recognition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organization's culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Task clarity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal growth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Previous

Next

9. What would make you accept reduced working week? 1=Disagree 5=Agree completely *

	1	2	3	4	5
Reduced working week would lead to better motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced working week would lead to more work efficiency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced working week would lead to higher costs for employers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My well-being would increase by reducing working hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced working week would lead to reduced sick leaves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced working week would benefit the society	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would accept reduced working week only if my salary did not change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would accept to reduce working week if my salary was reduced by 10%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced working week would lead to conflict with employers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In general, my work and well-being are in balanced	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In Finland, there is no need to reduce working week	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Submit