

Work-life management through the lens of the 4-day workweek



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Abstract

Alongside young generations and new technologies, the work environment and values are changing drastically and rapidly every year. Work-life balance and the four-day workweek are growingly discussed topics within organizations all over the world. The digital world has developed an environment that blurs the lines between the importance and urgency of tasks. Consequently, time management strategies have become obsolete and inefficient and create the illusion of having productivity.

Attention management is a concept that, in recent years, people and organizations try to put a higher focus on as a substitute for time management or as a complementary method. Although they have been researched before, there has not been conducted to show the relationship between managing work-life balance, the four-day work week, and attention management. Attention has mainly been researched, implemented, and discussed as a psychological and behavioral matter.

The project begins with a literature review on the main concepts which are researched and related to each other to build a theoretical framework for analysis: Work-life balance, The four-day workweek, Attention, and Time management. This paper provides a framework to analyse attention and time management as tools to achieve a productive workday and social life.

The research carries out an interpretative phenomenological analysis of two secondary sources, which present the experiences of the 4-day workweek of two different organizations.

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Introduction

Time is the primary value on the earth. Everything in this world depends on time; if we do not have it, we do not have anything. Most people value their money more than time, but time indeed is what gives us money, prosperity, and happiness, but nothing in this world can give us time. It can be used, but it can never be bought or sold. Most people live their lives unconsciously.

Time is money, but we cannot compare time with money since lost money can be earned, but only lost time will never be earned. Time is more than money and other precious things in the universe. Everything in this world changes depending on time. The ever-changing time shows the unique property of nature that "Change is the law of nature."

People think life is long. The truth is that life is too short, and we have so many things to do; we need to use every moment of our life correctly and meaningfully without wasting time. Our daily schedule, such as lessons at school, University, work, homework, sleep hours, wake-up time, exercise, food, etc., must be well planned. To understand the value of time and use it constructively. We all have the same amount of time every day, and the way we spend it sets us apart from other people.

In the current age of high working speeds, workers tend to get exhausted and stressed at work which lowers their concentration and causes a negative impact on their performance (Meah, 2021). As the work gets stricter and more stressful, employees may gather fatigue, which brings them to burnout. Burnout, the desire to quit everything – are also the consequences of a disturbed balance. Rest is necessary; switching; otherwise, tone and strength will disappear, respectively, and productivity will decrease. Therefore, combining hobbies, family, health, and work is necessary. Then the problem arises the question: how to distinguish these spheres?

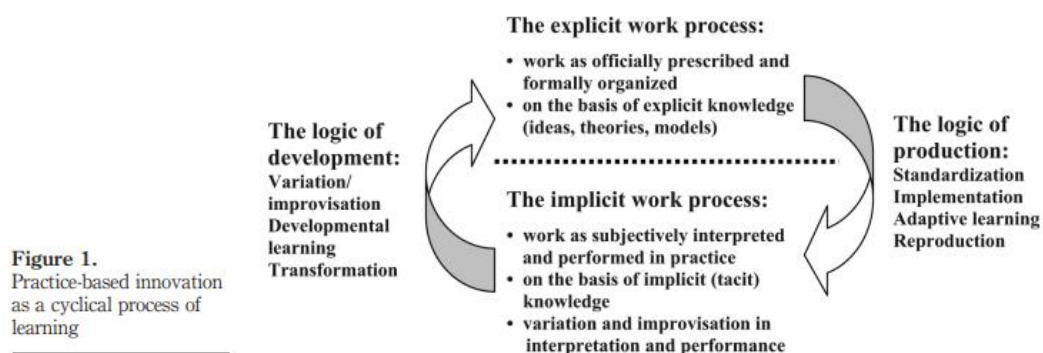
We will investigate the work-life balance, attention, and time management opportunities within the innovative four-day workweek concept during the current research.

The four-day workweek concept is an organizational and work culture act of social innovation through improving work conditions and providing employee satisfaction.

According to the father of sociology, Gabriel Tarde, and his theory of social innovation, social innovation is an act of "invention and imitation" according to the father of sociology Gabriel Tarde and his theory of social innovation. The act of countless imitations creates the social

phenomenon, which relates to the Four-day work week phenomenon in this paper. A practice-based approach to social innovation is required to access specific tacit knowledge about carrying out the practice, which will define the success of the imitation process. (Fuglsang, L., 2021) The imitation process requires bringing together the already possessed resources, which must be effectively deployed alongside the company's capabilities to ensure organizational success. The optimized exploitation of these resources and capabilities is the foundation of the competitive advantage of a particular business. "Practices are crucial for value creation" (Creativity for Service Innovation: A Practice-Based Perspective | Emerald Insight, 2014)

The practice-based innovation is a multi-disciplinary approach that consists of improving specific work processes or operations by implementing new routines, methods, services, or products. The key point in the practice-based approach is that the renewal is driven by a learning process that occurs within the process or operation under consideration. This definition emphasizes workplace learning as the driving force behind practice-based innovation processes. Lam (2005) argues that innovation occurs as a result of learning and knowledge generation through which "new problems are defined, and new knowledge is developed to solve them" (Lam, 2005). The generation of various ideas and ways of new process implementation is a key factor of a practice-based innovation. The learning curve within this approach is circular, hence why the practice-based approach to social innovation or any innovation is referred to as a "cyclical process of learning" (Ellström, 2010) shown in the figure below.



Source: (Practice-based Innovation: A Learning Perspective | Emerald Insight, 2010)

The implementation of the four-day workweek is a cyclical process of learning, adapting, and implementing interdisciplinary strategies and tools to achieve the work-life balance and productivity as an outcome of the concept. The two chosen secondary sources for analysis represent the cyclical process of learning how to manage time within a four-day workweek. These sources will be analyzed using the literature review and knowledge on attention management and time management. They will be evaluated to understand how they have been applied throughout the people's experiences and which one is more valuable and productive to apply.

Motivation

A long time ago, more and more people started discussions about changes happening in the workweek schedules. The vision of financial and career success is usually seen as a result of committing long work hours. There is a problem with the work-life balance and time management most of the time. It is interesting to give attention to the challenges and solutions experienced by people switching to the four-day workweek. This research is a great chance to look into the benefits and changes in people's lives doing the innovative four-day workweek transition.

The paper aims to provide a better understanding of the connection between attention management, time management, and the four-day workweek. Changes in the work environment are needed and will contribute directly to some of the sustainable development goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 Good health and well-being and SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth. The four-day workweek phenomenon is relatively new, and people remain skeptical and uncertain how the same amount of workload can be done having one day less. With this paper, the authors want to shed light and provide a better understanding of the mechanics behind the shorter workweek using already tested and experienced methods of attention management and time management.

Problem formulation

- *How does the 4-day workweek help to prioritize work and everyday life balance?*

Challenges, Limitations and Delimitations

The delimitations of the project concern the difficulty of obtaining primary data or sufficient primary data. The researchers encountered multiple challenges concerning contacting potential companies and employees for interviews. At the beginning of the project writing, we contacted about 15 companies that have already implemented the four-day workweek. We contacted all danish companies either by email or phone - IIH Nordic 8a Danish IT company), Odsherred municipality and UIMAGE (a Danish design company of furniture and lighting). We also reached out to companies in the UK and the USA. Most of the contacted ones refused to collaborate due to insufficient time and prioritizing essential tasks. After some time, we decided to switch to secondary data sources but still trying to figure out how to implement primary data. After more in-depth research, we found an interesting Japanese phenomenon called Karoshi (death from overwork). The topic piqued our interest, and we decided to have Karoshi and the phenomenon of Japan as a severe case of overworking as our main focus in the project. After taking this decision, we decided to reach out to Japanese expats in Copenhagen via the Facebook group “Japan Denmark Platform” and very quickly, we found five certain participants who were very interested in the topic or had had personal experience with the so-called “black companies” in Japan. However, after the midterm evaluation, we had to narrow down our project based on the provided feedback. We started brainstorming different ideas and came up with a new and improved structure based on a theoretical framework that we developed and used in this project. At first, we kept the focus on Japan. However, we tried to reach out to employees from Microsoft Japan and Panasonic via LinkedIn (the only two companies in Japan who have implemented or tested the 4-day workweek). Only one person agreed to an interview, we created the interview guide and conducted the interview. Unfortunately, we faced language barriers which led to gathering limited and irrelevant data. Consequently, we had to re-evaluate our situation based on the remaining time until the deadline and had to come back to using secondary sources.

The project has a broader focus over the four-day workweek without specific company cases. However, the research will look at the management side of handling tasks and prioritization, leading to higher productivity and better work and free time management, applying the concepts of attention management and time management.

Chapter 1

Literature review

1. Work-life balance (WLB)

Work-life balance is an essential and central part of this paper. People have devoted themselves entirely to work and career, leading to a life completely consumed by workaholism, whether my own choice or demanded by the employer. The following section will present a set of literature that supports the work-life balance terminology.

While work-life balance is often compared to its similar term, work-family balance, the former term includes a variety of roles an individual is expected to play, such as community, social, religious, and leisure roles. As we move into the modern world, work-life balance is becoming increasingly difficult, and this is due to the fact that it is not manageable to achieve a balance between work and other aspects of life.

The very well-known 9 am to 5 pm schedule originated from Robert Owen, a Welsh labor activist. In 1817, he developed the idea of dividing the day into three parts “8 hours labor, 8 hours recreation, 8 hours rest”. Later on, in the 1920s, Henry Ford was inspired by Owen and started the work-life balance revolution by implementing and mainstreaming the “9 to 5” workday (Dittmer, 2020).

Contrary to technological development over the last decades, the “9 to 5” workdays shifted to 24/7. The internet and high-paced digitalization created new opportunities to connect, work and achieve more tasks from the comfort of your home or office chair. This has led to drastically blurring the lines between work and private life.

Several phenomena (theories) have been identified in relation to work-life balance: segmentation, spillover, compensation, conflict, and boundary theory. The following theories on WLB aim to provide more in-depth knowledge of work and life interconnection.

Spillover theory

The spillover theory related to the interconnectivity between work and family, as defined by Pleck in 1995 as a phenomenon where “work roles affect family roles and contrariwise.” A vital aspect of the theory is that “spillover from family to work whereas men experience it from work to family .”The theory explores the emotional transition of feelings from work life to

family life and the opposite. For example, how does working under high pressure affect the behavior of people at home, or how does an unhealthy family environment results in a poor performance at the workplace.

Compensation theory

The next theory, the compensation theory developed by Steines in 1980, states that people look for positive feelings and experiences in one aspect of their life if they are missing them. (Shaw, 2022)

Conflict theory

The conflict theory relates the achievement of one role with sacrifice in the other, which is most often successful at the workplace, costs severely to private/family life, and leads to stress, anxiety, and behavioral change. Greenhaus & Beutell came up with three variations of conflict viz - time-based conflict, stress-based conflict, and behavior-based conflict.

Time-based conflict

The time-based conflict is closely related to the topic of this paper because it occurs due to a deficiency of time to manage two different roles in life (work and life). *“Long working hours, irregular shift work and work time not being flexible have been pointed out to being the source of the time-based work-life conflict”* (Khateeb F., 2021 p. 4)

Strain-based conflict

The conflict generated by the psychological demand of work, interaction fatigue, and job burnout results in strain-based conflict. (ibid.)

Behavior-based conflict

Behavior-based conflict arises when work demands behaviors that may not be compatible with a family role, and switching between these two roles can be stressful (ibid.).

Resource drain theory

The resource drain theory is based on the principle of scarcity, where time, energy, and money are the resources, and a deficit of any of them leads to stress and burnout. The theory is closely intertwined with the conflict theory and, more precisely, the time-based and stress-based conflict theories. Any conflicts can directly affect an employee’s physiological health leading to high blood pressure and affected sleeping patterns and quality behavioral health, resulting in high chances of alcoholism, mental health (depression), and low work productivity. (How, 2020)

Work-life conflicts lead to “poor health, depression and hypertension, coronary heart diseases, anxiety and irritability” (Khateeb 2021, p 30) and, in some more complicated situations, to overwork death (Karoshi).

2. The four-day work week

In 1926 Henry Ford established the five-day workweek with 40 hours of work, marking the transition from a 6-day workweek to a five-day. Later, after the Second World War, a four-day workweek was proposed but was rejected because companies did not consider it productive and efficient. The focus was on improving other aspects of employee working conditions, such as wages, benefits, health, and safety conditions. A central question discussed in the book is related to the extensive automation and technological advancement we have seen in the last decades. Modernization has significantly improved production efficiency and has replaced a decent amount of manual work. So the question is, "*why should we be working the same number of hours today as people worked when Henry Ford instituted the 40-hour workweek in 1926?*" (Grosse, 2018).

The success of a four-day workweek is complete and achieved once employees can easily assign their extra 8 hours each week to some non-work-related activities. This is a key to achieve a positive outcome by introducing a 4-day workweek policy. The real question and struggle is "to get to the 32-hour week" from a psychological perspective, which poses a barrier for people to change their permanent frame of living to a new, more leisured way of living. (ibid., p.27) The book refers to this state of mind as "anchoring," a form of cognitive bias, "*because once people have their views anchored in a given reality, it is very difficult to pull up the anchor and move*" (ibid., p. 29).

But if we assume that people succeed in separating themselves from the current norm of working 40 hours a week, then it comes to the question of "how do people divide up their time into various types of activity" (ibid., p. 45)

The actuality of a four-day/eight-hour workweek is growing all around the world, especially among researchers. Work productivity and work-life balance are already proved through the existed research. The innovative workweek shift faces many challenges related to the existed regular workweek employment norms (Grosse, 2018). The release rate is equal to that of a 40-hour worker designating that the four-day workweek would be an enhancing trend, not a cardinal deviation from historical norms (The Economist, 2021).

Organizations assume that decreasing the number of workdays reduces the hours available for work, causing a low productivity output and profits for the organization (The Economist, 2021).

The four-day workweek innovations are highly advantageous for both the institution and its employees due to the cause for the fact that it helps to accumulate time and money, raise the employee's self-confidence and job contentment, and develop the productivity level while descending fatigue and burnout during the workday. Implementing the four-day workweek allows both the company and employees to save their resources. Electricity and water bills are significantly lower if there is one extra day off each week (Grosse, 2018). During a four-day workweek, workers spend 20 percent less time per week getting to work and back home (Spencer, 2019). The transportation time and expenses are less.

Four-day workweek boosts workers' self-confidence and job satisfaction after getting the same salary as a five-day workweek (Meah, 2021). The satisfactory result during the innovative workweek develops the quality of performance at work, and the personal everyday life, making it more comfortable and reducing stress levels (Fontinha, 2021).

Due to diminished fatigue, in comparison to a five-day workweek, workers have an opportunity to achieve better work and everyday life balance, which is measured within a combination of income, life opportunities, reduced corruption, freedom, and social support (Sng, ., Khor, Oide, Suchar, & Tan, 2021). Four-day workweek is beneficial for the psychological condition of employees as the decrease in the number of workdays makes starting a workweek considerably easier for the workers (Meah, 2021). This will further raise the worker's self-confidence and job satisfaction level, inspiring them to work with higher motivation and effective productivity by doing the work they usually do in five days faster.

In the current age of high working pace, workers tend to get exhausted and stressed at work which lowers their concentration and causes a negative impact on their performance (Meah, 2021). As the work gets more strict and stressful, employees may gather fatigue, which causes them burnout, depression, heart attack, and many other diseases. As a life-world example, here is mentioned Karoshi - death from the overworking, or "Work to death." This term became significant in the 1980s. It was set as a condition of being constantly incapable of working or death from ischemic heart attack aggravated by excessive work overloading (Hosokawa 1982). Council for Karoshi Victims (1989) explains karoshi as a "fateful condition in which the rhythms of everyday life are imbalanced because of exorbitant exhaustion and the life routine maintenance abilities are ruined' (Kanai, 2008).

By working only four days, employees will be able to have more time for rest and stay active during their shifts. Focus development and rise in productivity help them work more efficiently. The Human Development Index (HDI) displays the progression of human development via measurements of life anticipation, level of competencies, and standard of living. When attention is paid to lower-level needs, workers perform better at work, thereby improving productivity. When there are fewer working hours per week, more time can be given to self-care and reduce burnout.

Four-day workweek shift requires leaders and teams to change their mindset and focus on qualitative productivity. According to psychological research, most people are "medium maximizers" — strongly value objective, quantitative progress at work. A new workweek schedule will give a chance for people to think more about the self-comfort, stress-reduced work environment and develop work-life balance (*Lockhart, 2021*).

Employees and leaders need to be involved in the whole innovative work schedule reconstruction process to value the quality of changes concerning expectations and reality. Changes in work hours affect internal processes and norms, so it is essential to discuss them in advance. Every organization has a different work structure. An innovative work schedule encourages the team to think about how to develop innovative tools for achieving productivity within a shorter time at work.

At least a few months are needed to do a full investigation. Pilot - study time will show the main company challenges. The constructive discussion with a team about employees' experiences with the four-day workweek and formal job gratification surveys can establish bias and development in stress level, work-life balance, and quality of life. Collecting data throughout the work optimization processes is an integral part of identifying whether there are any errors or areas to further improve or focus on. For example, is the team working overtime with more breaks, are they cutting the meetings, do the innovative working style about fast working?

It is significant to find the optimal ways to make work more effective without cutting the breaks and creating an even more rushed and hectic work environment. Leaders need to perform across the whole organization system to establish an innovative practice, which brings changes to the work culture. Most important is to ensure that workers adopt the innovative working methods and do not come back to the old working scheme, and keep the focus on work productivity instead of working hours. It is also essential to follow the success of short workweek results. (*Lockhart, 2021*).

The working focus moved into imperative tasks at the cost of long-term, more important ones. Organizations switched into monthly meetings to discuss long-term work strategies and coordinate priorities. Employees need to adopt

10-hour work per day to fit work into a four-day week (*Lockhart, 2021*).

The successful implementation of the 4-day work week is based on several factors we have gathered throughout the literature review. The first one is to communicate the motivation, strategy, and goals. Communication is a crucial component because transitioning to an entirely new structure affects every single employee on a deeper level than any other managerial or organizational change. The 4-day workweek deals with a deeper psychological level in different ways. First, it provides a better opportunity to manage different aspects of life-related social and work life, reducing stress and increasing happiness and satisfaction. Second, it challenges people's minds to change their way of thinking about work habits and managing workload. The following section will focus on areas affecting people's personal coping methods with time and workload.

3. Attention management, time and time management

Time management has been a buzzword in leadership literature and strategies to succeed in life. The real question we ask here is: How realistic is it to control time? Planning each day down to each hour and minute, what to do and accomplish within a specific time, would not ensure the outcome. Time management has become more like a strategy that leads to stress, overworking, overscheduling, and multitasking instead of providing guidance because everything becomes about squeezing all tasks into a time frame.

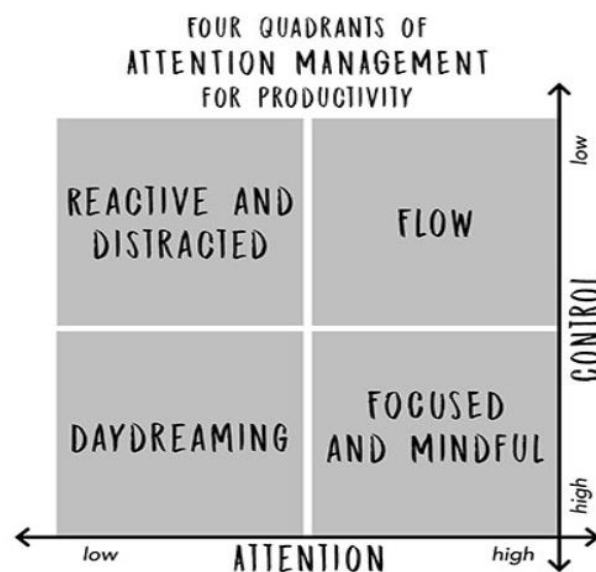
The real enemy of everyday life, especially when we have countless distractions and noise that disrupt our productivity and efficiency, whether at work or in our personal lives, is the loss of attention due to the inability to prioritize and focus on what is essential for the current moment. The new buzzword here is attention management.

The following sections will provide an understanding of time management and attention management which will be supported by theories on time management and attention from psychological and leadership literature.

3.1. Attention and attention management - the future of success

Attention management is in fact not an early idea. In 1890, the American philosopher and educator, William James, was the first one to propose the idea of attention management where “focalization, concentration and consciousness” are key to attention. (James, 2017, p 507). *“It implies withdrawal from some things in order to deal effectively with others, and is a condition which has a real opposite in the confused, dazed, scatterbrained state which in French is called distraction, and Zerstreutheit in German.”* (ibid., page 507).

While James and Bain talked about attention from a psychological and emotional perspective, no scholar has related the concept of attention with productivity until Maura Nevel Thomas, who wrote the book “Attention management: How to create success and gain productivity every day.” Her work on attention management is the most widely cited. She is well known as a speaker, author, and trainer on productivity, individual and corporate, and work-life balance. Her main argument is that time management strategies are obsolete and irrelevant in the new modern age where distractions are on every corner, and all tasks seem essential. Time management remains a primary strategy in every productivity book and involves making a list of everything that needs to be done by the end of the day. *“If you still make a list every morning, it probably becomes obsolete as soon as you check your email. We all grapple with an influx of communication previous generations couldn’t have imagined, and everything seems urgent. That makes it harder to prioritize.”* (Tomas, 2019, p.15)



Source: Attention management book, page 23

It is about making sure your activities address the areas that matter to you most when it comes to productivity. Attention management is an effective way to achieve this. The book author identified four quadrants of attention management because “*Attention management isn’t a single behavior. Instead, it’s the collective practice of a group of behaviors*” (ibid., p.19). Hence, attention management depends on a sequence of changes in behaviour which are tightly interconnected and interdependable and “*you decide where your attention goes instead of letting outside demands decide for you.*” (ibid., p. 19) The four quadrants are based on the level of attentiveness and control over attention.

The first one, Reactive & Distracted, is characterized by having a high level of distraction and multitasking and being unaware of the lack of focus and attention (ibid.).

The second one is Flow which, although it has a high level of attention, the person has a low sense of control. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a Hungarian-American psychologist, defines Flow as a state in which a person enters unconsciously, and specific parts of the brain “disengage” and control become “effortless” (ibid.) The person is fully engaged, absorbed, and attentive to the task in this state. However, this state of mind is rarely achieved nowadays because of all the minor distractions surrounding us, whether an email or phone notification. They all lead to disrupting attention and breaking the state of Flow without realization. Productivity is also being disrupted, and although days seem to be busy, hectic, and productive, they are the opposite. Attention span is fragile and easily leads to high levels of dissatisfaction. This could be a core reason for putting in many hours of work to make up for the lost time and reach satisfaction on a personal and managerial level.

The third state, Daydreaming, is an exciting phenomenon characterized by insufficient attention but high control. Maura describes the state as “*choosing not to focus on anything in particular,*” a state of “*mind-wandering*” and brain recovery (ibid.). Daydreaming is achieved in moments when people do not check their phone while they are taking a walk or waiting in a queue, for example. In these situations, also referred to as “in-between” moments, the brain wanders around and thinks about random things. Daydreaming is underestimated and viewed as unproductive and boring because it feels and looks like a waste of time and boredom. However, Daydreaming is the state of the brain in which it reflects and process information, and ideas are generated effortlessly (ibid.). A clear example that is often experienced by every person is coming up with great ideas while taking a shower, and it is not a coincidence. Taking a shower has remained probably the only time of the day when a person can enter the daydreaming state.

The final quadrant, focus, and mindfulness, is a behavior that eliminates distractions willingly and creates an environment that is needed and required to achieve a maximum state of attention management. Remaining focused and mindful are conscious psychological states which are reached willingly by “*acknowledging your thoughts and feelings*” and “*centering yourself in the present moment*” (ibid., p25). In this state, the person is aware of the moments when needing to be “present in the moment” but recognizes that he/she is getting distracted by external factors. Being in this quadrant refers to having control over these distractions and being able to quickly disregard them and focus the attention back on the task at hand.

Attention management underlines the importance of changing behavior at the workplace by eliminating unnecessary tasks and distractions. It is about working smarter, not harder. It is about people being capable of directing and controlling their attention wherever needed and taking control over the attention. If attention management is not applied, time management strategies become irrelevant, inefficient, unproductive, frustrating, and stressful. Implementing strategies to prioritize successfully, control any distraction that you are aware of or can predict, and eliminate multitasking as a positive personal skill, would create a better mindset environment to activate the potential of attention management practices.

Above was already mentioned that time management strategies are obsolete, and the next section will present what time management is.

3.2. Time management

Organizations often view unproductivity as incapable of time management; however, it is essential to understand time management, how it differs from attention management and whether it can be an efficient tool for productivity and success within new practices such as the four-day workweek.

Time management provides a package of strategies and tools to effectively allocate time to complete tasks within a specific period. However, as many organizational strategies and educational training, they are highly generalized and exclude individualist behavior and personality. Each person is unique and generalized strategies for time management might not be effective. Before defining time management, we will provide an overview of what time is.

3.2.1 What is time?

First, we will introduce time from a management and organizational perspective. In a paper from 1988 written by Allen Bluedorn and Robert Denhardt, time is characterized as a “variable,

not a constant” (Bluedorn & Denhardt, 1988, p. 300). It is a product of a socially constructed knowledge of what time means. Therefore, the understanding of time and the value of time varies from culture to culture, society to society, and organization to organization. Richard Lewis identified three different cultural views on time, linear time, multi-active and cyclical time. He distinguishes time perception between Western and Eastern cultures as a deeply cultural and historical-infused social construct (Lewis, 2018). Japan falls into the cyclical category where time is seen as unlimited and not a scarce resource (ibid). Decisions and problem tackle occur over several days without taking any immediate actions or decisions. Culture, history, and rituals heavily influence the Japanese culture and traditions passed on from generation to generation. They take their time to allocate time to small but significant gestures and details. It is a culture where “form and symbols are more important than content” (ibid., p.120). This sharply contrasts the commonly business linear approach to managing time in the Western profit-oriented society where “time is money” is far from the Eastern understanding of time being an unlimited resource. A monochronic society is another way of defining the Western social construct of time. It relates to doing “one task at a time,” which resonates closely with the concept of time management. Reflecting on the attention management literature, we can highlight the obsolete characterization of time in western society because it is humanly impossible nowadays to focus on a single task until it is completed.

The linear concept might be implemented to a certain degree in countries such as Japan. However, their philosophy of time allocation and efficiency would remain highly differentiated from the West. It is a significant milestone towards achieving or adapting to any significant changes in the workplace.

3.2.2 Time management

Time management as a business philosophy was developed after the Industrial revolution when Frederik Winslow Taylor wrote his book in 1911, *The principle of scientific management*, aiming to develop a scientific approach to achieving things faster and more efficiently. He was a well-known American mechanical engineer and one of the first management consultants. His book was acknowledged as the most influential management book of the 20th century (Wikipedia contributors, 2022a). Alongside him, Frank and Lillian Gilberth are considered the fathers of today’s known time management. Their work was based

on maximizing efficiency in the manufacturing process, and later on, these practices were transferred onto personal life. Taylor's approach to productivity was more focused on quickness. In contrast, Frank and Lillian empathized with the well-being of workers and based their work on increasing productivity by eliminating unnecessary motions and believed that achieving efficiency can only be realized through maximizing profits and increasing employee satisfaction. This is a core statement that today's businesses are trying to achieve by implementing various practices and strategies, such as the four-day-work week.

One of the most famous books written about time management is *The 7 Habits of Highly effective people: Powerful lessons in personal change* by Stephen Covey. Based on his own research, he defined three generations of time management:

- The first generation makes use of notes and checklists as a way to give recognition and inclusion to all the demands placed on our time and energy.
- The second-generation use calendars and appointments and focuses on future planning
- The third generation is the current one

which emphasizes the importance of prioritizing, defining values, daily planning, and setting goals. However, in this wave of time management, people have realized that having control of time and trying to plan each part of the day efficiently does not lead to any productivity because the real enemy of productivity is not as much having control over time having control over ourselves. This is the fourth generation's starting point, which we believe is based on the attention management concept that emerged in the past few years and is gaining more recognition. To some extent, Covey created a foundation for attention management. However, he did not address it directly and did not relate it to attention span and challenges with maintaining attention.

The diagram below shows the fourth generation of time management based on which people can spend their time in 4 different ways (Covey, 2013).



(Covey, 2013, p. 273)

Urgent activities or tasks are those that are most visible and require a quick action. They are also “*pleasant, easy, fun to do. But so often they are unimportant*”. (ibid., p. 274)

Importance is related to results and outcomes. It is identified as something that brings value.

The book classifies that most people situate their 90% of the time within Quadrant 1 and the rest 10% in Quadrant 4 as an escape route from Q1. The people in this category “manage their lives by the crisis.” (ibid.)

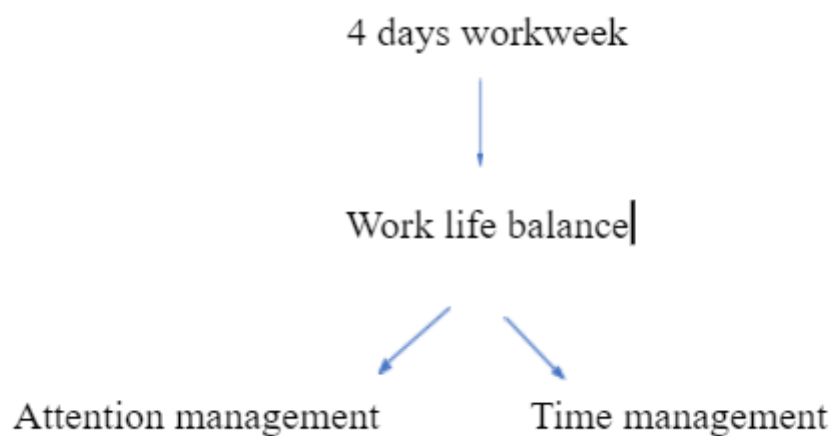
Another category of people are those who spend their time in Quadrant 3, thinking that they are in Quadrant 1. The significant issue here is considering urgent tasks as necessary, and it directly relates to the key issues of attention management.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this project will be based on work-life balance, 4-day work week, time management, and attention management. We combine them into one framework to analyze the interconnection between these four concepts.

We will analyze the four-day workweek through the work-life balance as a result from applying attention management and time management. From the literature review, we can conclude that the 4-day work week could lead to a well-balanced work-life if the principles of attention management and time management are successfully implemented with a stronger emphasis on attention management as a core theory and principle in the new modern world.

Attention management has never been looked at through the lenses of the 4-day workweek, but more as a separate psychological matter related to the shortening of the attention span of people due to countless distractions.



The theoretical framework will be used to analyze attention management and time management, identify their roles and place towards achieving a well-managed everyday work schedule, and personal time management within the 4-day work week concept. The model depicts and explains how we have examined successful work-life balance. The main goal is to have a successful four-day workweek through the effects and outcomes of having a balanced work-life and examine this from two different perspectives - attention management and time management.

Chapter 2

Methodological framework

1. Philosophy of science - Critical realism

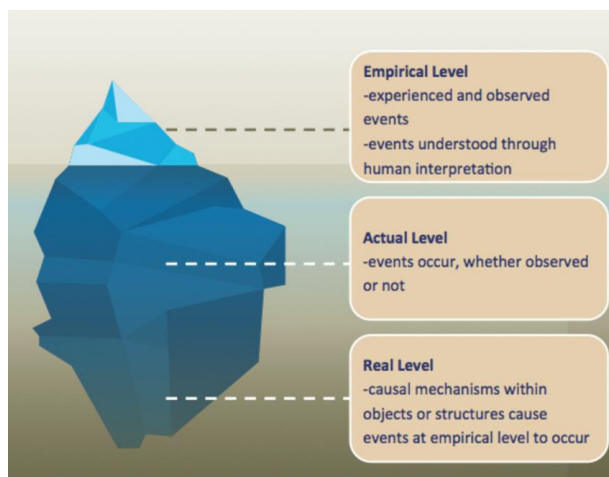
The philosophical concept was developed by Roy Bhaskar in the 1970s. The ability to participate in description and random analysis (instead of a detailed empirical description of a given context) makes CR useful for investigating the social problems and find solutions for social change (innovation). In CR ontology, the reality is divided into three stages (*Fletcher, 2017*).

The first is the experiential level, which is the sphere of action identified as subjective experience. At this level, events can be verified empirically and usually interpreted through 'common sense,' but these facts are constantly mediated due to subjective experience. The transitive stage of reality, where social concepts, content, resolutions, and actions happen – but significantly, these can be causal (*Fletcher 2017*).

The middle stage contains the "actual." At this stage, human experiences are not "imaginary." The action happens whether or not we experience and explain them. These real events sometimes are different from what is visible at the practice (*Danermark et al., 2002, p. 20*). Finally, the third stage is the real. At this stage, causal construction or 'causal mechanisms' exist. These are the natural objective characteristics or content that act as a causal endeavor to produce cases. The primary objective of CR is to describe social acts concerning the causal regulations and the consequences they can have all over the three-layered 'iceberg' of reality

(iceberg figure source: [\(19\) \(PDF\) Applying critical realism in qualitative research: Methodology meets method \(researchgate.net\)](#))

The iceberg metaphor is not intended to propose that any of the presented levels are more or less 'real,' or that the stages are not interconnected. Certainly, all stages of the iceberg belong to equal reality. The metaphor demonstrates the CR ontology and epistemology as it refers to human awareness of reality, to show in visual form the restrictions of the epistemological delusion. As Bhaskar (1979) highlighted, in comparison to the natural world, social structures are in fact activity-dependent (*Amber J. Fletcher 2017*).



The critical reality is relevant to current research because everyone has individual interpretations and a vision of reality. Investigating human experiences is always an issue related to shared experiences. Participants can easily cheat, and share the facts which they think are good to say because they know that we will believe, and never check the real situation.

We as researchers, "see" only the presented side of experience, but we never know the truth - hidden reality, especially using secondary data.

2. Analytical strategy - Interpretative phenomenological analysis

The chosen analytical strategy is applied in this research because we investigate the human experiences related to a structure of time management and attention management within four days workweek concept. IPA is a very flexible approach and has an excellent organized, analytical content and patterns. Concerning analytical content here is good to mention that IPA contains the thematic coding (Smith, 2016)

Thematic coding is the method for identifying and reporting the themes within data. It is the way to structurize and describe the data broadly in detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006) Thematic approach focuses on the content. Used in studies mostly related to knowledge and understanding aims/objectives. (also views/ perspectives / preferences, information needs.)

(Given, 2008) Doing the current analysis is very important to follow the specific analysis structure. The thematic analysis contains six stages:

1. Familiarity with interview transcript (read a couple of times) During this stage is essential to read the transcript more than once and look into the valuable information. If needed, write it down, and add any related comments) (Given, 2008).
2. Initial coding (highlight and develop the categories) The coding process happens in the foundation of highlighted information and comments during the transcript reading (Given, 2008).
3. Organizing codes into main themes and sub-themes - when the codes are developed, follow the theme creation process. Each theme combines the general meaning of the content (Given, 2008).
4. Review the themes and sub-themes - afterward, when all themes are developed, it is essential to look into the content of created themes and make sure that all-important information is included (Given, 2008).
5. Defining and naming themes - next stage is to name each theme and sub-theme according to the content (Given, 2008).
6. Writing up (Given, 2008).

Secondary data is already collected data by other researchers and used as primary data for different purposes. The main characteristics of texts are their symbolic nature (belonging to a specific sign system) and the presence of certain information that is transmitted through this text in an explicit or implicit form. According to the type of data, these can be printed and handwritten documents (reports, transcripts, letters, notes, diaries); audio, photo, and video documents (cassettes with interviews, photographs); physical evidence (personal belongings). It can be biographical data (personal documents, interviews), observation diaries, answers to open questionnaire questions, and expert opinions. Huge arrays of textual data represent an indirect reflection of reality and can be accumulated mainly using (qualitative) methods. The variety of documents and texts as potential secondary data is both an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage lies in the richness of meanings gleaned from this diversity. The disadvantage is the need to work with a massive flow of unstructured information. Texts can be created either independently of the researcher or on his initiative. (*Smith 2008*). We chose to analyze the secondary data while doing current research because there was no opportunity to collect primary data.

3. Research Design

4.1. Description of used sources and criticism

Once we established the final theme of the project, we had to carefully think what kind of data we were looking for and what kind of secondary data sources would be suitable. As we already mentioned above, the analysis of this research is based on using secondary sources, which we have picked out from the internet. We changed the project's focus a few times throughout the decision-making process, which led us to switch from primary data to secondary data, then again to primary, and once more to secondary. Deriving from our initial desire to have interviews, we decided to find an alternative to this by using existing interviews or blog articles where employees or companies share their personal experiences of the 4-day workweek.

Deciding what type of data we look for in the sources helped us identify keywords we will use to type in the browsers. We used primarily YouTube because we wanted to work mainly with videos, but we also used Google to find potentially useful blog articles.

The first source is a video titled "*How a 4-day work week changed my life*" (appendix 6), and made by Goal Guys, a small family business consisting of two brothers who create videos on YouTube, showcasing "*how much an average joe can accomplish with focus and determination.*"

The video is sponsored by Shortform, which is a business aiming to "*make it easier to access the world's best ideas.*" Despite the sponsorship, we do not believe that Shortform has had any influence on the content of the video.

In the video, one of the brothers talks about his personal experience of the 4-day workweek and analyses the outcomes and struggles throughout the first month of the transition. We chose the video because we wanted to hear a more personal experience description rather than an overall organizational video from an HR or managerial perspective.

The second used source is a blog article written by Wildbit, "*4-day workweeks: the experiment that never stopped*" (appendix 7) Wildbit is a small working company in Philadelphia and implemented the 4-day workweek in 2017. The article was written by Chris Nagele, the co-founder of Wildbit, in 2020 and illustrated their experience with the 4-day workweek. The article is written with more informal language, making the reader feel like he is reading a more genuine and sincere article without any promotional messages. This was the reason for choosing this article.

We evaluated the two sources as reliable and relevant for our project because they are based on the personal experiences of two existing companies. Typically, secondary data could be biased and written in the writer's favor and interest. We tried to choose sources that we feel like are more transparent and sincere. The two companies are relatively small. They tend to be more transparent people nowadays trust more small companies than big conglomerates, which promote themselves and seek better brand image for-profit purposes.

4. Research quality criteria

Validity - is related to the "degree that a method investigates what it is intended to investigate" (Kvale, 2007, p. 122). To identify the methodological validity, first, we need to look into the research question. Problem formulation here is about, "*How does the four-day workweek influence work prioritization and everyday life management?*". Question is related to everyday life experiences.

Critical realism as philosophy is applied here because it prioritizes the "world" through 3 different perspectives of world reality. In relation to current research, Critical realism is visible through human experiences, of how they "see" the four days work week and work-life balance in their interpreted reality. The 4-day workweek reality is independently happening. Moreover, last is the actual "underground" hidden actions, different from visible reality.

IPA - Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. This analytical method is valid for current research because it is used here to analyze the human experiences related to the four days of the workweek and everyday life and work balance. It's the perfect concept to answer the research problem.

Secondary data - The content of chosen data describes human lifeworld experiences; that is why it is valid for this research.

Reliability - is about "consistency and trustworthiness of research findings" (Kvale, 2007, p. 122). We adopted a theoretical triangulation method by presenting a set of different literature sources to provide more in-depth knowledge on the studied topic and support our data collection and analysis. Critical realism is a subjective and interpretative paradigm. Therefore, it requires to have the background knowledge to be able to interpret the data using already gained knowledge.

Chapter 3

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

We have decided to create a logical chronological order of themes which would represent the set of steps or activities or experiences which the people and organisations describe.

Theme 1 – “Decision-making”

Consequently, we will start with a theme which describes what are the reasons and thoughts behind the decision-making process to transition to a 4-day work week.

We have extracted 3 quotes from 2 of our secondary sources:

“Before sharing how to be successful with a shorter workweek, it's important to point out why you'd want to in the first place. Here's what we've gained from working less with more intention.” (appendix 7)

During the working day, priorities often depend on other people's needs or approaching the deadline. A similar situation happens when a minimum of time is spent on essential things, and most of the force is spent on secondary work. Effective prioritization — with a sense and taking into account further goals — will help to change this order, provided that each task you undertake has a certain significance, and secondary actions are not included in the list of essential things. Prioritization of tasks radically changes the working day to spend time in the office and at home as efficiently as possible. Necessary conditions in the process of work prioritization include a complex decision-making process and needs to act iteratively, including different stages during work balance development. Work-life balance includes attention management, where it is essential to prioritize the work-related activities, and time management, where employees create the schedule with the deadlines. Prioritization is a significant part of a successful workload (Lehtola, Kauppinen, Kujala,2004).

“So I decided if I really wanted to have more time free from work, I needed to start making it a real priority in my life. So I did some research online and landed on the idea that I was going to try for the next 30 days to implement a four day work week as a tool to help me achieve this goal.” (appendix 6)

Brendan: "When I was overworking myself through the early months of the year, I really treated days like today as part of my social time to chat and hang out, which only made the work take longer and prevented me from having meaningful time off later in the week."

(appendix 6)

The quotes above showcase a typical process of any innovation and the intent to undergo any drastic organizational or business strategy changes. The process starts with the idea generation and extensive research and evaluation of the reasons why the innovation is needed, who will benefit from it, and what existing resources and capabilities can be used. At the beginning of the project, we referred to Gabriel Trade's theory of social innovation being an act of "invention and imitation," where imitation leads to the phenomenon of social innovation. We related the success of the imitation process to the practice-based approach, in which, according to Fuglsang, tacit knowledge is a key foundation. In the video which we use in our data sources, the person clearly states that he did prior research which helped him to find a solution to his problem of lacking work-life balance and difficulty in finding the borderline between his work and life: *"I really treated days like today as part of my social time to chat and hang out, which only made the work take longer and prevented me from having meaningful time off later in the week."* (appendix 6)

The two sources are closely connected to our theoretic framework. The participants have related the four-day workweek as a solution to creating a work-life balance. *"I still want to get as much work done as I normally would, but I am just giving myself less time to do it. Yeah, that is pretty much the whole plan."* (appendix 6) His statement here has characteristics of time management where he intends to squeeze in all tasks with the difference of having less time for them. This is the last part of the theoretical framework where we look at the model from two different perspectives: from attention management and time management point of view. We can see that someone inexperienced practically with the four-day workweek would automatically think that the concept refers strictly to performing all tasks, whether urgent or essential or non-urgent and non-important, within a shorter period. The misconception results from the long years of studying time management and pushing it as a strategy for success at work and in personal lives. However, with time and the development of technology and social media, it has become challenging to achieve a high success rate by simply implementing time management strategies. *"Time management has become more like a strategy which instead of providing guidance, leads to stress, overworking, overscheduling and multitasking because everything becomes about squeezing in all tasks into a time frame."* (from literature review)

On paper, the 4-day workweek requires a person to get their work done, and it is intuitive to give yourself less time for each task, which would not work if there were no additional changes around the work environment, work processes, and habits. The process of 4-day workweek implementation requires thorough organizational changes - automatization, work culture reevaluation, and creating office space free of distractions.



Source: P. (2017, August 15). *Open plan vs enclosed office space*. Procol. <https://procol.co.uk/open-plan-vs-enclosed-office-space/>

In Denmark, there is the familiar concept of creating open office spaces, which, although they are very socially oriented and open to network, are also an enemy to attention. Passing by people, cleaning staff, delivery staff, food delivery, easy access to people to ask any “quick and easy” questions, phone ringing, colleagues chatting, a dog running around seeking attention. The list is long, and although these businesses are highly preferred due to their inclusive, flexible, and friendly environment, it is the exact opposite of what is needed to achieve successful attention management.

Theme 2 – “Successful work culture”

The work culture is a broad perspective that includes workspace organization and ensures the employees' work efficiency and maximum safety. The culture of labor relations is a favorable psychological climate, which is greatly influenced by the living conditions of the employee and his psychological characteristics, and decent remuneration for the amount of work performed. The work culture is about individual professional qualities, diligence, and the ability to organize the working time efficiently (Taylor 2003).

“Adopting a [people-first perspective](#) is something we're passionate about at Wildbit, and we hope to see more companies embrace this approach.” (appendix 7)

The second theme presents what it means to develop a work culture which is employee centred or as Wildbit refers to “people-first perspective” and “*we hope to see more companies embrace this approach.*” This reflects the imitation process of the social innovation phenomenon. If there is no chain reaction, there would not be a real change.

We have divided the theme into 5 sub-themes: Psychological well-being, Employee development, Office environment, Teamwork and Challenges.

Sub-theme “Psychological well-being”

We will begin with Psychological well-being because it is a fundamental factor and sign for having a satisfying work culture.

“Unsurprisingly, working less frees up time for the team to experience more outside of work. [Our company exists for our team](#), and everyone's better off when they have time to do what they love with the ones they love.”

According to the work-life balance concept, technological diversity and future development is a good solution in the workplace, because then there are more options to realise the innovative 4-day workweek in a more successful level. So, it is about doing workload through more intensive teamwork, through job sharing (Dittmer 2020).

“Your brain gets to recharge when there's a consistent three-day rest period.”

Work-life balance is interchangeably connected to the psychological state of employees. According to the work-life balance concept, if career success is overly prioritised, it severely limits the time for personal life and mental regeneration. To avoid the negative outcomes, employees need to “*have time to do what they love with the ones they love.*”

“Instead of meetings, we use emails, Slack messages, and [automated check-ins](#). We have guidelines for how to request feedback and when it makes sense to interrupt someone with a direct message. It's not perfect, but by defaulting to async, our team is mindful of the attention of others.” (appendix 7)

According to the presented experience, the team is trying to save time and raise work productivity through automatic online communication instead of organized meetings. However, here is a challenge. To read and react to emails requires time. At the same time, emails can save much time from unnecessary check-ups and update meetings. However, if there are any emerge issues to solve online, the team needs to reorganize the work schedule to manage the planned workload and solve additional issues. It can be even more stressful for the team because all planned work needs to be done in 4 days instead of 5 (Fontinha, 2021). Online written communication takes even more time than having direct communication. Because during the direct meetings, the team has an opportunity to discuss problems and find solutions immediately, without tension and overwork. On the other hand, the recipients have time to reflect on the message and make a more thoughtful decision through written communication. The vital point from this paragraph is that employees need to be able to read the situation correctly and choose the more suitable mean for communication in each case.

Sub - theme: Challenges

“Usually this is the kind of thing that I feel like I don't excel at, so I like to break it up so I can work on and off through the course of a week, so definitely feel nervous about taking it all on in one go and committing to that at the same time. I know if I see this through and I really get it done right, I have a three day weekend to look forward to, so that is already a huge motivation and it's actually made me pretty excited to get started to work even on a Monday morning.” (appendix 6)

In the first part of the quote above, we can see that the speaker feels insecure about the principle of committing to one single task without breaking it into different parts. This is one of the major challenges which everyone who is new to the 4-day work week practices, feel most pressured with because people are used to multitask and switch from one to another on an

ongoing basis. Deriving from the theories of attention management, multitasking is an overrated skill. According to a definition in Wikipedia, human multitasking is “*is the concept that one can split their attention on more than one task or activity at the same time, such as speaking on the phone while driving a car*”. However, dividing up attention can result in errors which would require extra time to fix, lower productivity and increase stress levels and workload. ([Human multitasking - Wikipedia](#)).

Sub-theme: “Employee development”

“Natalie believes a vital part of her job is to create an environment where people can get their best work done and push themselves past their comfort zone. When you support your team in every way you can and give them space to grow, everyone is more fulfilled.” (appendix 7)

A toxic work environment creates unpleasant feelings and, at the same time, de-actualizes the behavior of employees. This environment reinforces low self-actualization of behavior and leads to negative behavioral traits in employees. A responsible and reasonable worker can turn into an irrational and irresponsible worker in a toxic work environment. That is why the work environment is very significant to give attention to. The behavioral environment consists of components related to how well office workers are connected and what impact the office environment can have on human behavior and quality of work.

A supportive work environment provides employees with a pleasant experience and allows them to enhance their abilities and behavior. This type of environment also reinforces self-fulfilling behavior. An irresponsible employee can become a responsible employee in a supportive work environment Haynes (2008).

Sub-theme: “Office environment”

The behavioral environment consists of components related to how well office workers are connected and the impact of the office environment on human behavior. According to Haynes (2008), the physical environment with the productivity of its occupants is divided into two main categories: office layout (open plans, cell offices) and office comfort (office environment matching with work processes), and the behavioral environment have two main components, namely interaction and abstraction Haynes (2008).

“We don’t do open floor plans, and remote teams can’t work out of a coffee shop four days a week. For a 4-day workweek to work, you have to create a quiet space. As more families work

at home together, the emotional dynamic is just as important. Creating space for conversation and committing to flexibility are a few ways that [companies can be people-first during COVID-19](#). Wildbit provides a home office stipend to help our team build the right kind of environment that enables focused work.” (appendix 7)

The Covid pandemic blurred and even removed any borders between work and life. The home space turned into an office space in a blink. As tempting as it sounds, and probably many people have dreamed of it before the pandemic, working from home has shortcomings on mental health and maintaining focused work. Wildbit emphasizes that achieving “emotional dynamic” has never been more critical.

Sub-theme: “Teamwork”

Work culture is personal and professional work skills acquired in the course of work. Labor activity not only creates benefits to meet personal needs, but also forms the personal qualities of the employee. During their working life, employees acquire new knowledge and skills, and in order not to lose them, they are constantly improving. An important condition for a work culture is labor discipline (Grosse 2018).

“We still occasionally question our shorter workweek, even three years in. It’s made us realize how important communication is. If someone is concerned about getting everything done, they need to talk to their team to shift priorities or share responsibilities.”(appendix 7)

The success of the 4-day work week depends heavily on teamwork and communication. If anyone feels overwhelmed with the tasks, the issue must be communicated with co-workers and identify which tasks are urgent and essential (Grosse 2018). This would contribute to better attention management and reducing stress levels. Through teamwork and communication, employees would not need to try to manage all of their tasks despite the lack of time but instead place priority (Taylor 2003).

Theme 3 – “Social life”

“And it’s not just about having more leisure time. That fifth day is huge for [parents who have been hit hard by COVID-19](#). And as Wildbit is a people-first business, we encourage our team to use that fifth day to make an impact in the communities they care about. Both a three-day weekend at the lake cabin and volunteering with a favorite charity are perfect uses of that additional day off.” (appendix 7)

In the context of the presented experience, giving more free time, the company invites the team to care for people who need help. Through the free will participation “*as Wildbit is a people-first business,*” the company gives the free day to do something good out of the working schedule, but still for company-related perspectives. According to the work-life balance, it is essential to identify personal life values. Personal life values will change throughout life if there is a sense of success and joy (Dittmer 2020).

Sub-theme “Leisure time”

“I have the entire day off and I’m going to spend that time first visiting the Vancouver Public Library to relax and unwind for the first half of my day. Okay, so one thing I’m realizing is, having the day off isn’t as much fun when you are the only person with that day off. That said, it is a really nice day and I have brought a book that I’ve been really looking forward to getting started reading, so can’t say I’m complaining. And yes, for anyone keeping track at home, bringing my camera with me does technically mean I’m accomplishing work. But if sitting and filming is the hardest thing I do today, I still think I’ve had a pretty relaxing day, which is unfortunately not how it would describe any of my experience with week two.” (appendix 6)

This experience demonstrates two sides to having an extra day free. Because this type of workweek is quite innovative and adopted by just a couple of companies, there is a feeling of confusion, as the participant argues, “I’m realizing having the day off isn’t as much fun when you are the only person with that day off.” (appendix 6) It means that there will not be an opportunity to enjoy the free day with a family or friends because everyone else is working on that day. Here, another aspect is shown, which proves that everything depends on what we are doing. If the work is something that we like, it gives a positive vibe, reduces tension, can be done out of schedule, and is perceived as leisure, a kind of freelance position when the work time and location are flexible. According to Dittmer, it is imperative to plan your free time, including working, following deadlines, and teamwork. (Dittmer 2020)

Theme 4 – “Attention management”

“Something magical happens when you consciously choose tasks and create space for uninterrupted work — more gets done.” (appendix 6)

“You have to have your priorities straight if you want to have the same impact in fewer days a week. We began to ask, “what are we working on, and why?” (appendix 6)

Prioritization, eliminating distractions, conscious self-management, and behavior change are the key concepts of attention. The quote resonates with William James' description of attention *“It implies withdrawal from some things in order to deal effectively with others...”*. It is about behavioral change, and although time management theories suggest that task prioritization is needed, it does not address the importance of attention and how it correlates with task and work productivity. *“Consciously choosing tasks and creating space for uninterrupted work”* is the state of Focus and Mindfulness in the Matrix of Attention management in Maura Novel's book *“Attention management: How to create success and gain productivity every day,”* which we addressed in the literature review (Nevel Thomas, n.d.)

“Okay, so I've just put up my weekly to do list and I am really trying to manage my time like it is a limited resource this week. Which means prioritizing and making time for the things that are the most important.” (appendix 6)

Here is an excellent example of a time planning and attention management combination to solve the overload, overthinking, and reduce stress. Attention management helps identify the focus on the most important work-related areas.

Successfully combining work and personal life is not an easy task these days. People are torn between home and office. They want to do everything here and there. Only now, it often turns out that in the end, one of the spheres of our life is on the sidelines.

“When I was overworking myself through the early months of the year, I really treated days like today as part of my social time to chat and hang out, which only made the work take longer and prevented me from having meaningful time off later in the week.” (appendix 6)

The statement above illustrates the mind state of Reactive and Distracted in the matrix where the speaker experienced a high level of multitasking, leading to disrupted attention, longer time to complete tasks, and having less or no time for any leisure or family activities the end of the week. According to the attention management concept, changing behaviour at the workplace

through eliminating unnecessary tasks and distractions is the way to establish the proper work schedule. It is about working smarter, not harder. (Thomas, 2019)

“By focusing efficiently on the work up front. We’ve even been able to rap early on a couple days to hang out without the stress of impending deadlines, and not only am I able to enjoy more free time.”(appendix 6)

This experience proves the effectiveness of time and attendance management theory in practice. Doing things by following created structure, such as the time schedule, and prioritizing the work, gives a productive outcome. This process reduces the stress level, raises the psychological well-being, and even gives more free time. This is an excellent example of successful work-life balance creation. (Thomas, 2019)

Sub-theme “Mind state”

“Since problems marinate in our minds over the weekend, we usually come in on Monday morning with an idea of how to solve it.”

“Personally, I did find this adjustment to be really difficult to stick with, especially at first. I’m someone who gets easily stressed out when I feel like I’m falling behind schedule, and I think that was a major part of why I was trying to work so much at the start of this year.”

(appendix 6)

This experience shows the effect of overworking. Overworking needs to be reduced, because it has a negative effect on the ability to concentrate on the right things, raises the stress level, and creates issues to meet deadlines. It proves the importance of the attention management theory, that highlights smart working, instead of quantity of hours spent at work.

Sub-theme “Procrastination habits”

“Distractions happen, but we’ve learned that sometimes the biggest threats to deep work are hiding in plain sight. During a team retreat in 2018, Slack kept coming up in discussions about what takes us away from focused work. [So we ditched it.](#)”

“For a week, we stopped using public or shared channels. We realized that Slack was a procrastination enabler, driving a constant itch to check-in or update the team. While we’re back to using Slack, the break gave us some much-needed perspective on habits that interrupt deep work.”

The Slack topic in this theme is related to these attention disruptors (attention management matrix) and urgent but not important activities (Q3 Distraction in Time management matrix). According to the Time management matrix, checking Slack is like checking email being an unnecessary distractor. However, it has become an inseparable part of our daily lives, and people perceive it as an urgent and essential task, whereas it is not. If the message on Slack or email were urgent, the sender would have called or come to the office.

The difference between applying time management strategies and attention management strategies is that in time management, checking Slack would be a task left to do either after office hours on the way home or something to do at the beginning or end of the shift. In contrast, attention management strategies would eliminate the existence of Slack or at least turn-off notifications throughout the day, to eliminate the distraction from the notifications on the phone or the computer (Thomas 2019).

Sub-theme "Challenges"

"Usually this is the kind of thing that I feel like I don't excel at, so I like to break it up so I can work on and off through the course of a week, so definitely feel nervous about taking it all on in one go and committing to that at the same time. I know if I see this through and I really get it done right, I have a three day weekend to look forward to, so that is already a huge motivation and it's actually made me pretty excited to get started to work even on a Monday morning."
(appendix 6)

A self-motivated person formulates the goals to which he aspires, uses various tools to achieve them, and overcomes difficulties arising in the process. Employees with solid self-motivation are focused on constant self-improvement and personal growth, which ultimately affects the organization's development. In other words, with the self-motivation of the management team, there is an opportunity to positively influence not only the income of its employees but also to consolidate the best specialists who know how to achieve their goals (Bluedorn, & Denhardt 1988b).

"So today is not going great. I have had pretty consistent computer problems all morning and finally just decided to shut it down and restart. And this is kind of opening my eyes to how much a restricted work schedule can really magnify even small problems. I'm only going to lose maybe two to 3 hours of computer delays in the restarts, but knowing my schedule is already as densely packed as it makes it hard to wonder how I'm going to actually catch up. And because of these delays, as well as just a more demanding work week, I wound up working

through Friday and even into Saturday morning to try and catch up, really making me wonder am I just a legitimate workaholic? Should I talk to someone about this? But also, is it really possible to accomplish more while working less? What should I do when I reach the end of the week and I didn't get everything done in my four day, 32 hours window?" (appendix 6)

The quote above highlights a vital challenge with managing workload in cases of unpredicted situations which disrupt the workflow, as in the case of the IT issues in the quote. A regular 4-day workweek does not accommodate any significant interruptions because even if two hours have been wasted due to the unpredicted occurrence, it would significantly influence the rest of the week. Despite this, it still puts less pressure on the employees because the tasks have been prioritized carefully, and any unnecessary activities have been eliminated. In time management, all tasks would be piled up and create an even more chaotic and stressful situation (Taylor 2003).

Theme 5 - "Time management"

"At the start of this year, I told myself I was going to do a better job at managing my work life balance. Then as soon as I fell behind on my first project, I decided to work through the weekend to try and catch up. Then I found myself doing the same thing the following weekend as well, and I quickly realized I wasn't just failing to manage my work hours. I also wasn't getting that much more accomplished as the more hours I was putting in, the less efficient I became" (appendix 6)

Here is visible the major issue related to time management. There is a general belief that time management is about overworking, giving more attention to details and that working more hours gives progression and personal success. Most of the time, employees forget that work quality is not about quantity. It is about the balance between workload and free time. According to Gilbert, to achieve high results, the well-being of workers is most important. His work is based on increasing productivity by eliminating unnecessary motions. He believes that achieving efficiency can only be realized by maximizing profits and increasing employee satisfaction (Gilberth & Kent, 2016)

The quote above represents the decrease in efficiency and productivity due to extending working hours and ignoring the importance of free time for mentally and physically regenerating.

“Meetings are disruptive, period. Sure, they’re sometimes necessary and valuable. But anyone who’s thought “that meeting could have been an email” already understands the value of [asynchronous communication](#). (appendix 7)

The mentioned term above, “asynchronous communication,” relates to eliminating unnecessary meetings in real-time. It is a “life-saving tool” and “ensures that your message finds its recipient at the best possible time.” Asynchronous communication varies in methods - emails, Slack, internal communication channels, Asana, etc. These methods allow employees to choose when and from where they want to check up on these channels based on their availability and schedule. The downside here is that the online connection platforms encourage employees to stay connected and always be available. To avoid missing important decisions and discussions, people try always to be online and participate in as many conversations as possible, which harms well-being and productivity.

While asynchronous communication is an effective tool if used correctly, it cannot be the only method used within the company. Brainstorming sessions, for example, cannot be conducted through written language. The asynchronous communication approach will be more suitable in a video meeting or personal meeting where the interaction is direct.

“The time spent preparing, having the call, and getting back into a state of deep work can [lower productivity](#), not to mention mess with someone’s day. Meetings can be especially disruptive when you’re planning across time zones.” (appendix 7)

Online communication raises stress levels. The thought that an employee will be available always means that workers are not independent and cannot structure their schedule by themselves. They sacrificed their working days responding to requests instead of setting their agenda in advance. Often people compensate for the time lost due to interruptions in work by trying to work faster, which leads to stress, frustration, and an even more significant lack of time and fatigue. This type of asynchronous communication culture can quickly lead to burnout.

This also leads to lower quality discussions and suboptimal decisions. People do not have time to think carefully about key issues and give thoughtful answers when they need to respond immediately. The first answer to a particular situation is often not the best.

This is a case of divided attention due to dual-tasking and multitasking. Divided attention disrupts efficiency and productivity because the two or more tasks conducted simultaneously utilize the same cortex of the brain, leading to disruption in the performance level. (Moisala et al., 2015) According to a Harvard business review, unnecessary calls are some of the most

disruptive factors during a workday (Stop Wasting Your Time on Work Calls, 2016). According to the article, arranging logistics for a future call through an unexpected call takes much more time than writing an email. It will put the recipient in a position where he will not be able to reflect on the request and might give a poorly thought-through response, leading to either unproductive meetings or extra emails and calls back and forth to arrange any changes to the agenda or schedule.

Theme 6 – “Strategies for efficiency”

“Time and attention are valuable resources. That’s why we aim to empower humans to do essential work and automate the rest. If we automate something small, like expense reporting, it can save someone an hour a week. While it’s small, that adds up.” (Appendix 7)

This experience demonstrates the alternative way for human empowerment related to organizing attention management. There are presented two strategies for manual work and automatization involvement. During these two strategies, it will be possible to improve work productivity. Because in the automated work strategy, human involvement is minimal, it means that there can be two different work positions carried out by one person simultaneously (Thomas, 2019).

“Just because we have a 4-day workweek doesn’t mean customers stop needing us on Fridays. So, we’ve adopted a policy where the customer support team trades off between Mondays and Fridays off. That way, there’s support in essential functions five days a week.”

Sub-theme “Empowerment (to be productive)”

"Employee empowerment" are ways in which non-executive employees can make decisions without consulting their managers. These decisions can be small or large, depending on the degree of power the company wants to invest in employees. Conversely, it may simply mean allowing employees to make some decisions independently. (Thomas, 2019).

“As long as work gets done, it doesn't matter how long it takes. Ideally, we set clear goals, and we work on them as our brain and ability allow us to. Perhaps that looks like working on Fridays, but fewer hours each day. Or maybe it's an eight-hour day, and then a day off, and

then a two-hour day. We don't know what the future holds, but we know we want to empower each individual to be productive, in addition to us as a company.” (appendix 7)

The idea of employee empowerment is that it gives power to individuals and thus makes them happier. According to the attention management concept, employees become more invested in their company within the opportunity to make choices and participate at a more responsible level. They have an opportunity for a collective decision-making process. When employees feel that they have a choice and can make immediate decisions, this often leads to productivity in the workplace. In a model where power is closely linked to a sense of creativity and decision making, having some power is a valuable thing (Thomas, 2019).

Sub – theme “Challenges”

“Usually this is the kind of thing that I feel like I don't excel at, so I like to break it up so I can work on and off through the course of a week, so definitely feel nervous about taking it all on in one go and committing to that at the same time. I know if I see this through and I really get it done right, I have a three day weekend to look forward to, so that is already a huge motivation and it's actually made me pretty excited to get started to work even on a Monday morning.” (appendix 6)

Within the demonstrated experience, having more days free motivates an employee to get done with the planned amount of work in time. It is crucial to mention the significance of structured attention management, which helps create the work plan and reduce stress. The work plan is needed to schedule a workload correctly, divide it within available workdays, and reduce the destructive working. Understanding the goal allows you to draw a clear line between real work and being busy. Real work requires the full use of skills and knowledge, and it contains a challenge and forces you to get out of cozy environment. It is challenging to work this way, so the reactive brain actively resists and evades. He keeps us busy with any business that helps to dodge the actual work. According to attention management, it helps to gain and adopt new experiences. It transforms it into healthy behavior and the same time, helps to develop work-life balance (Thomas, 2019)

“So today is not going great. I have had pretty consistent computer problems all morning and finally just decided to shut it down and restart. And this is kind of opening my eyes to how much a restricted work schedule can really magnify even small problems. I'm only going to lose maybe two to 3 hours of computer delays in the restarts, but knowing my schedule is already as densely packed as it makes it hard to wonder how I'm going to actually catch up. And

because of these delays, as well as just a more demanding work week, I wound up working through Friday and even into Saturday morning to try and catch up, really making me wonder am I just a legitimate workaholic? Should I talk to someone about this? But also, is it really possible to accomplish more while working less? What should I do when I reach the end of the week and I didn't get everything done in my four day, 32 hours window?" (appendix 6)

This experience shows that structured attention and proper time management are significant for workload during the 4-day workweek. Otherwise, it can be a complex issue, including problems related to unexpected technical issues and many different small complications, which delays the working progress because all attention is moved not into work, but to things work depends on. And then it is hard to reach and do a considerable amount of work in a shorter period. It also raises stress levels and creates psychological destruction. According to the attention management theory, there is an opportunity to be more proactive and decide individually how to divide the attention. Within attention management, individuals can control their thoughts and actions (Thomas, 2019).

Chapter 4

Discussion

The following section will discuss the current research results received from IPA. Secondly, the current research results will be compared with other research results investigating a similar topic. Later on, the limitations related to studies will be described.

Problem description

The current research problem highlights the destructive work and everyday life balance management. The content of the raised problem has a pretty broad context and interconnects different life-world aspects, such as overwork, disbalance, personal health condition, family relationships, and social interaction. Research problem formulation investigates how the 4-day workweek helps to prioritize work and daily life balance.

To investigate the research problem area, a specific methodological framework was created by the authors of this paper. The content includes a set of suitable methods. All the methods appear in the research quality criteria (Validity). During the problem formulation process, the research was related to critical realism. We applied interpretative phenomenological analysis to analyze secondary data sources available for public use on the internet.

The theoretical framework includes two essential components, or as we call them, perspectives which we will use to analyze work and daily life balance, time, and attention management. The content of IPA highlights six themes. According to IPA results, there are significant findings to highlight and answer the research problem.

4-day workweek & work-life balance

"So I decided if I really wanted to have more time free from work, I needed to start making it a real priority in my life. I still want to get as much work done as I normally would, but I'm just giving myself less time to do it." (Appendix 6) Results show that during the trial 4-day workweek period, participants are motivated to make an innovative work schedule permanent.

Psychological well-being and social life and four days work week.

The current research demonstrates that four days workweek develops psychological well-being, for employees can have an extra day free to refresh minds, reduce the stress level and get ready for a new productive workweek, in that way satisfying work culture (Dittmer 2020). *"Unsurprisingly, working less frees up time for the team to experience more outside of*

work. Our company exists for our team, and everyone's better off when they have time to do what they love with the ones they love." (Appendix 6)

"Attention Management" during four days work week.

"Okay, so I've just put up my weekly to-do list, and I am really trying to manage my time like it is a limited resource this week. Which means prioritizing and making time for the things that are the most important." (Appendix 6) This result shows an already structured plan for the 4-day work implementation within the attention management practice. During this process, employees improve their skills of planning and prioritizing time and workload and learn how to develop their balance between work and free time.

"Teamwork"

"We still occasionally question our shorter workweek, even three years in. It's made us realize how important communication is. If someone is concerned about getting everything done, they need to talk to their team to shift priorities or share responsibilities." (Appendix 6) The research results show that structured teamwork is very productive during the four-day workweek when the workload needs to be done in a shorter period. Successful teamwork has constructive attention management and strictly followed deadlines (Thomas, 2019)

"By focusing efficiently on the work upfront. We've even been able to rap early on a couple days to hang out without the stress of impending deadlines, and not only am I able to enjoy more free time." (appendix 6)

"Time management" during the four days work week.

"Adding a half-day of work on Friday helped me clean up those extra tasks in the week and lay out a plan for when I came back on Monday. I'm even finding on days I'm filming with Cam were more productive and focused with their time." (Appendix 6)

In the research conducted by Julia Topp; Jan Hendrik Hille; Michael Neumann, and David Motefindt, were analyzed the specific case investigated, "How a 4-day Work Week affects Agile Software Development Teams?" The research results show that significant were the attention management, through which were developed the meeting schedules, meetings became more structured, focused on work-related – context, and private communication was refused (Topp et al., 2021). "The 4-day workweek and remote work have a positive effect on the work of the "Agile" software development teams by increasing job satisfaction" (Topp et al., 2021, p.10).

Same as current research, the researchers found that the 4-day week also raises job success rates for employees - they feel happy, balanced, and satisfied because they have an extra day off to relax and spend time with family or friends. The 4-day workweek helps lower work-related stress (Topp et al., 2021).

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The problem we raised in the current research is *how does the 4-day workweek influences work prioritization and everyday life management?* During the investigation, we realized that this problem has a global context, and it continues to rise due to the development of digital technology and obsession with it. It has created a complex work-life and vast problems with everyday time schedules. Today, people feel confused about identifying the smart working correctly and replacing the quantity of hours spent at work with fewer hours but higher quality.

This research found that the 4-day workweek concept is the right direction to a potential global social change towards a better work-life balance for everyone. However, it needs to be adopted into content and company goals as an innovation. Moreover, this phenomenon cannot be applied as a single practice; it will not work. There are a couple of practices that need to be included as regular tools when the organization wants to apply the 4-day workweek practice successfully.

Within this research, two leading practices were identified for work-life balance within four days of the workweek. Attention management is an excellent practice, especially for big organizations where the workload is very high. Attention management is about everyday work, prioritizing and focusing attention continuously on what is essential, and eliminating unnecessary distractions willingly. According to research results, attention management helps organize the workload, give attention only to the most important work, and reduce useless work processes and time waste. This practice is essential for a 4-day workweek because, within less

work hours weekly, the workload looks the same as at five days but only if not prioritized or organized effectively.

The second practice is related to time management. Doing more in less hours requires rigorous planning. Otherwise, there will be work delays, stress, and four days of workweek practice will have a negative impact on work life.

An important topic and factor here is productivity. Time management on its own is not sufficient. Attention management is challenging to implement practically because it requires significant self-discipline and self-awareness of what distractions a person has. Eliminating these noises is an essential step toward achieving successful attention management. The next important step is, as already mentioned above, prioritization. The skill of prioritizing may seem simple, but in reality, everything looks essential. Our research showed that the applied strategies, such as eliminating Slack and sending emails instead of unnecessary calls or meetings, significantly improve their ability to focus on the tasks. While neither of the two strategies, time and attention management, accommodate any significant disturbances by unpredicted situations like IT issues, applying only time management would not work out effectively. It will put more strain on the person because all tasks would need to be completed regardless of unnecessary or non-urgent matters. If attention management is implemented instead, the results could be significantly different and positive. For example, the person in the video interview shared that instead of having a 4-day workweek strictly, he had chosen to work just extra 4 hours on Fridays or every second Friday. To do minor tasks such as answering emails which otherwise would have interfered with the main work tasks and delayed their completion.

Overall, attention management provides a new perspective on our work and our social life. It helps to prioritize our tasks and create a more vital self-awareness and self-discipline by recognizing distractions in our everyday lives and limiting them. Attention management needs a proper reflection on our personality to find out our most productive time slots of the day to plan our tasks and activities accordingly.

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