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The Four-Day Workweek in Portugal: Possibility or Utopia?

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Master in Management

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Department of Marketing, Operations and General Management

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Acknowledgments

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You're on your own, kid.

Resumo

Com o avanço tecnológico e devido a eventos tais como a pandemia do COVID-19, a forma de trabalhar mudou nos últimos anos. As condições de trabalho foram adaptadas às novas tendências e os trabalhadores viram-se obrigados a acompanhar essas mesmas alterações.

A semana de trabalho de quatro dias é uma alternativa à tradicional semana de trabalho de cinco dias e pretende trazer maior equilíbrio entre a vida profissional e pessoal dos trabalhadores, gerando uma maior satisfação e possível motivação que poderá causar o aumento da produtividade dentro das empresas. Este estudo qualitativo pretende avaliar a implementação da semana de trabalho de quatro dias em Portugal.

Foram realizadas 18 entrevistas, com o intuito de reunir as vantagens e as desvantagens mais comumente associadas a este tema, bem como para entender se seria possível implementar, no panorama atual de cada trabalhador, a semana de trabalho de quatro dias e que alterações seriam necessárias.

O estudo conclui que os trabalhadores associam maioritariamente a semana de trabalho de quatro dias com o aumento da produtividade e o equilíbrio entre a vida pessoal e profissional. Pelo contrário, o aumento das horas de trabalho durante os quatro dias é a maior desvantagem associada com este método, bem como a dificuldade de implementação em certos setores e a possibilidade de redução de salário. As medidas de implementação mais faladas foram a automatização de processos e a organização do trabalho.

A semana de trabalho de quatro dias é mais do que uma organização da semana de trabalho. É um convite para reavaliar o que de facto são as prioridades sociais, humanas e económicas. Ao vermos os resultados de quem já viveu este modelo, torna-se evidente que é possível trabalhar menos e viver melhor.

Palavras-chave: Semana de trabalho de quatro dias, redução da jornada de trabalho, equilíbrio entre vida pessoal e profissional, organização

Classificação JEL: J22-Distribuição do Tempo e Oferta de Trabalho; M54-Gestão do trabalho

Abstract

With technological advances and events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the way we work has changed in recent years. Working conditions have been adapted to new trends, and workers have been forced to keep up with these changes.

The Four-Day Workweek is an alternative to the traditional five-day workweek and aims to bring greater balance between workers' professional and personal lives, generating greater satisfaction and possible motivation that could lead to increased productivity within companies. This qualitative study aims to evaluate the implementation of the Four-Day Workweek in Portugal.

Eighteen interviews were conducted to gather the advantages and disadvantages most associated with this topic, as well as to understand whether it would be possible to implement the Four-Day Workweek in each worker's current situation and what changes would be necessary.

The study concludes that workers mostly associate the Four-Day Workweek with increased productivity and work-life balance. On the contrary, the increase in working hours during the four days is the biggest disadvantage associated with this method, as well as the difficulty of implementation in certain sectors and the possibility of reduced wages. The most talked-about implementation measures were process automation and work organization.

The Four-Day Workweek is more than just a reorganization of the workweek. It is an invitation to reevaluate what social, human, and economic priorities really are. When we look at the results of those who have already experienced this model, it becomes clear that it is possible to work less and live better.

Keywords: Four-day Workweek, work-time reduction, work-life balance, organization

JEL Classification: J22-Time Allocation and Labor Supply; M54- Labor management

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Contextualization of Dissertation Theme	1
1.2. Research questions and goals	1
1.3. Dissertation Structure	2
2. Literature Review	5
2.1. Four-day Workweek	5
2.2. Results of the Four-day Workweek	6
2.2.1. Advantages of the Four-Day Workweek	7
2.2.1.1. Job Satisfaction.....	7
2.2.1.2. Work-life balance	8
2.2.1.3. Health benefits	9
2.2.1.4. Fewer costs	9
2.2.2. Challenges of the Four-day Workweek	10
2.2.2.1. Difficulty in adapting.....	10
2.2.2.2. Sectors.....	11
2.2.2.3. Non-consensual day off	11
2.2.2.4. Employee creativity	11
2.3. Inconclusive results	12
2.3.1.1. Productivity.....	12
2.3.1.2. Environmental impact.....	13
3. Conceptual Model and Research Hypothesis	15
3.1. Drivers of the Four-day Workweek	16
3.2. Barriers to the Four-Day Workweek	16
3.3. Implementation Measures.....	17
4. Methodology.....	19
4.1. Participants	19
4.2. Data Collection	20

4.3. Interview Procedure.....	21
4.4. Data Analysis.....	21
4.5. Study Quality	22
5. Results	23
5.1. Drivers of the Four-Day Workweek.....	23
5.2. Barriers to the Four-day workweek	28
5.3. Implementation measures	33
5.4. Participants' Opinions	38
6. Discussion.....	41
7. Conclusion and Final Considerations	45
7.1. Conclusion	45
7.2. Final Considerations	46
7.2.1. Practical Considerations	46
7.2.2. Theoretical Considerations	47
7.3. Future Research	48
7.4. Limitations.....	48
8. References.....	49
9. Appendices	55
Annex A- Demographic Description of Participants.....	55
Annex B- Cited Advantages, Disadvantages, and Implementation Measures by each participant.....	55
Annex C- Category Dictionary	57
Annex D- Interview Script.....	58
Annex E- Advantages codes in MAXQDA.....	59
Annex F-Sector Code Extracts from Interviews.....	59

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Advantages of 4DWW Identified in the Literature Review.....	10
Figure 2: Barriers of 4DWW identified in Literature Review.....	12
Figure 3: Conceptual model.....	15
Figure 4: Drivers mentioned during Data Collection	23
Figure 5: Barriers mentioned during Data Collection	28
Figure 6: Advantages and Disadvantages Found in the Literature Review and the Present Study.....	44

1. Introduction

1.1. Contextualization of Dissertation Theme

After the COVID-19 pandemic, the way people work changed, flexibility rose, and employees' perceptions of their jobs gained a new level of importance.

Work-life balance is more important today than ever and understanding how productivity can increase might give companies opportunities to boost their competitiveness, develop and refine their strategies and efficiency, and foster an organizational environment where employees have room to grow and share their ideas (Hideo, 2020).

Although the Four-Day Workweek has been explored primarily in recent years, the concept began to gain traction in the United States in the 1970s (Hung, 1996). Interest in the Four-Day Workweek increased between 2008 and 2012 and has been more recently discussed since 2019 (Campbell, 2023).

Acknowledging how the correct implementation can contribute to the long-term adoption and standardization of this model is an interesting factor. Understanding why this model has not been commonly implemented in Portugal and whether there are obvious obstacles that could be overcome, or if it would not be effective in our business context, is the primary objective of this dissertation.

This dissertation will examine the feasibility of implementing a Four-Day Workweek in Portugal. The study will not focus on a specific company, but rather on contacting multiple professionals from diverse backgrounds and areas of work to understand whether, from their perspective, the Four-Day Workweek could become a reality and their perceptions regarding this subject.

1.2. Research questions and goals

With the elaboration of this dissertation, the main goal is to answer the question “Is it possible to convert companies in Portugal to a Four-Day Workweek?”. Understanding the multiple points of view presented in the current literature review regarding this subject, as well as the studied benefits and challenges, could bring us closer to understanding whether its regularization in Portugal would be beneficial or hardly accepted by the organizations and companies that form our economy. The literature review will also identify potential gaps in the study of the Four-Day Workweek that could be explored or improved. The research will address

three key questions regarding the drivers, barriers, and implementation measures of the Four-Day Workweek.

This research will examine the perceptions of both employees and managers regarding the implementation of a Four-Day Workweek and the potential changes that may result from this approach.

The first research question aims to identify the primary drivers that workers associate with the Four-day Workweek. This will help us understand what workers value in their job positions and what changes the Four-day Workweek brings that could help satisfy those preferences.

On the other hand, the second research question will enable us to understand the barriers associated with the Four-day Workweek and whether these are significant enough for companies not to adopt this method. Understanding the negative perspectives of employees regarding this subject could be extremely helpful in adapting implementation measures and increasing the acceptance rate.

The research question on implementation measures will help us understand what the Four-Day Workweek introduces to companies and how its proper implementation can lead to success.

Although interviews will follow a script, all participants will have the freedom to make personal comments and share their honest opinions on this subject. This will help enhance understanding and gather diverse thoughts about the Four-Day Workweek and what each person thinks about it.

These goals and research questions aim to understand the practical measures that could be implemented if companies were to adopt the Four-Day Workweek, whether employees are receptive to this approach, and how each organization can support positive outcomes in terms of employees' work and well-being.

1.3. Dissertation Structure

The following dissertation is divided into six chapters, each one constructed to help answer all the research questions and complete the goals cited above.

Chapter One provides a brief introduction to the dissertation theme, explaining why the study is relevant in the current work context and outlining the goals associated with the study. This chapter outlines the dissertation structure to help readers understand its development and what to expect from the document.

Chapter Two presents the literature review, which explores existing research on the Four-day Workweek. The review clearly explains the Four-Day Workweek in practical terms, gives

a brief historical overview of the approach, and describes how the workweek length has changed over the past few decades.

The advantages and the disadvantages that authors suggest for the Four-Day Workweek were also studied to understand which points should be taken into consideration when developing the script for the interviews.

Chapter Three presents the conceptual model and research hypothesis considered in the development of this dissertation. This chapter aims to structure the study, providing insight into why the research questions were chosen, with support from existing literature.

Chapter Four explains the selected methodology for this study. It also provides information on the data collection technique, how participants were selected, and how the data will be analyzed to conclude. This chapter verifies the transparency of the collected data and justifies the choices made to ensure the validity of the results.

In Chapter Five, the analysis of the results will be elaborated. Results have been structured in a way that addresses all the research questions and complements the literature review. Important information obtained from the interviews, along with supporting examples and direct quotes from participants, is presented in a more vivid manner to inform the conclusions.

Chapter Six discusses the results. This chapter compares the findings from the qualitative interviews with the theoretical insights from the literature review. It assesses whether the information reviewed in Chapter 2 aligns with the drivers, barriers, and implementation measures identified during the interviews.

Chapter Seven presents the conclusions drawn from the study, along with recommendations and potential paths for future investigation related to this topic. The limitations associated with this study will also be discussed to ensure that future results do not replicate them.

This structure ensures that the dissertation remains clear and well-organized, while also ensuring that all relevant topics are covered with accurate and detailed information.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Four-day Workweek

A Four-Day Workweek (4DWW) is an alternative work arrangement in which employees work four days instead of the usual five, with daily working hours varying from 8 hours to 10 hours, depending on the company's decision (Bird, 2010). It is part of a compressed workweek, which results in an employee working a full-time schedule in less than five days (Kossek & Michel, 2011). This definition will be used throughout the dissertation.

The Four-Day Workweek pretends that employees should work toward reducing the standard hours of work while maintaining the title of a full-time job (Chung, 2022). This means that companies could maintain the usual five-day workweek while trying to reduce working hours each day or let employees leave earlier on a specific (or rotating) day, while maintaining the same salary.

In 1930, Keynes predicted that, with the help of new technologies, the workweek could be reduced to 15 hours within a hundred years. The 40-hour workweek gained popularity primarily after World War II (Rasmussen, 2023).

The concept of a Four-Day Workweek gained popularity in the United States in the 1970s, specifically with the 4/40 workweek, which involves four days of work with ten hours per day (Gannon, 1974). It was introduced by managers of multiple companies, rather than by workers' unions. In 1971, 670 business organizations out of the 5 million existing in the United States had converted to a Four-Day Workweek (Brown, 1972). A significant innovation that emerged from this arrangement was the use of work schedules as a management tool (Riva Poor, 2010). Understanding the needs of employees and adjusting working hours to improve performance can be a powerful tool for managers (Riva Poor, 2010).

Nowadays, the European Union directive imposes a maximum of 48 hours of weekly working time, including overtime. Veal (2022) affirms that the 4/32 (Four-Day Workweek with 8 daily working hours) is a twenty-first-century phenomenon.

We can affirm that working hours tend to decrease over time, and the current working hours are significantly less than they were a century and even a few decades ago (Huberman & Minns, 2007). Another important factor to consider when discussing flexible work schedules is that the COVID-19 pandemic prompted companies to adapt their work to remote settings (Nowrouzi-Kia et al., 2024).

Flexible work schedules enable employees to choose their work hours, days, and location (Evans et al., 2004). The flexibility of work can vary in terms of working hours, days of work, and the location of work (Kossek & Michel, 2011).

When discussing flexibility in work timing, examples include rotating shifts, flextime, the Four-Day Workweek, and the compressed workweek. Flexibility in location or place of work includes telework, as well as travel or client office work. Flexibility in the amount of work (reduced workload and hours) includes part-time work, temporary layoffs, and job sharing (Kossek & Michel, 2011). The Four-Day Workweek is a type of flexible work schedule in which the timing of work is adjusted (Kossek & Michel, 2011). Flexible scheduling and the freedom to adjust working hours and location can help employees overcome their work-family imbalance (Ajaib et al., 2024).

2.2. Results of the Four-day Workweek

The Four-Day Workweek is a management practice that can solve problems for companies, but for successful implementation, the company must have a good corporate culture and an innovative spirit. It can be applied across all sectors, although it may be easier to implement in certain ones (Gomes & Fontinha, 2024). Several pilot projects regarding the Four-Day Workweek have been recently conducted. Companies from various countries have expressed interest in testing this model and determining whether its adoption would enhance results and outputs. The following concepts are those that companies applying this model highlighted as benefits or aspects that were challenging to overcome. Most cite increased morale, higher productivity, lower costs for companies, and less absenteeism (Campbell, 2022; Gomes & Fontinha, 2024). A more detailed analysis of the results presented so far regarding the Four-Day Workweek in various studies will be provided.

Estimates suggest that workers with more formal education and greater potential labor-force experience are less likely to adopt a Four-Day Workweek. Younger workers with less than five years of experience are more inclined, compared to experienced workers, to choose a Four-Day Workweek. This may be because these employees find it harder to replace skilled workers when switching to a four-day schedule (Hammermesh & Biddle, 2025).

2.2.1. Advantages of the Four-Day Workweek

2.2.1.1. Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction can be defined as the degree to which an employee is satisfied with their work tasks (Hoffman-Miller, 2024).

Job satisfaction derives from each employee's perception of their work. It is based on factors such as working conditions, policies and procedures, and the supervisor's style (Gibson, 2009). Each employee has preferences, so job satisfaction will also vary from individual to individual, depending on the importance given to each factor that contributes (or does not) to job satisfaction. It can serve as an indicator of each employee's willingness to work at their best performance (Hoffman-Miller, 2024).

Job satisfaction has a positive impact on multiple aspects, including performance, productivity, and organizational commitment (Andrade et al., 2023). Companies would benefit from satisfied employees, who would improve outcomes. The job satisfaction of each employee is likely to develop over time spent in the organization, which can enhance the support received and trust built (Baptiste, 2008).

Work flexibility takes many forms and has various variables. It can differ regarding work hours and schedules. Daily organization and location of work can affect job satisfaction differently for each employee. The Four-Day Workweek disrupts employees' schedules and creates greater flexibility in their time management. There is a clear relationship between work flexibility and job satisfaction. The more flexibility employees have to manage family matters, the greater their job satisfaction is, with work and family not interfering with each other (Andrade et al., 2023).

In 2023, Lewsey reported findings in a trial developed by Cambridge social scientists in 2022. A six-month study in the United Kingdom, involving 61 organizations that implemented a Four-Day Workweek with no wage reduction, found that the enhanced work-life balance increased job satisfaction, as employees had more time for personal activities (Es Said, 2024).

A study by Yadav et al. (2024) concluded that flexible scheduling has a positive impact on employee satisfaction and improves work-life balance, as workers can adjust their schedules to accommodate other personal needs. It also revealed a growing need for flexible work schedules; however, measuring the impact of flexible scheduling on organizational outcomes is challenging, as quantifying productivity and employee satisfaction is a difficult task.

2.2.1.2. Work-life balance

Work-life balance occurs when employees can separate the time spent on their work from their personal and family life (Ganapathi, 2016). It can also represent the degree of satisfaction perceived by employees regarding the balance felt between the attention given to their work and aspects outside of work (Greenhaus, 2003).

Work-life balance enhances both the organizational commitment of employees and their organizational behavior (Andrade et al., 2023). Workload, as defined by Vashdi et al. (2021), refers to a large amount of work that needs to be completed within a short period. A study by Johari et al. (2018) has shown that for teachers to achieve high performance, schools should provide them with autonomy and a work-life balance. As previously mentioned, the work-life balance is the main factor associated with the Four-Day Workweek. A four-day workweek creates a work process that prioritizes focus over distraction, contributing to a sense of meaningful work and well-being (Barnes, 2020).

A poor work-life balance causes consequences in workers' health, like poor diet, excessive alcohol consumption, sleeping difficulties, and mental problems originating from the lack of time to recover from working hours (Baptiste, 2008).

A 2023 pilot study developed in Portugal led 41 companies to adopt the Four-Day Workweek. More than 1000 workers were involved during this period to understand the real effects of a 4DWW. Before the study, 46% of workers considered it difficult or very difficult to balance work and family responsibilities; during the pilot, this number decreased to 17%. When referring to balancing work with personal or social life, before the study, 50% affirmed that it was difficult or very difficult, and during the study, this dropped to 16% (Gomes & Fontinha, 2024).

Another company that has tested the Four-Day Workweek is Unilever New Zealand. In the press release, the company announced a trial in December 2020. The goal was a 4/32 week (four days of work, completing 32 hours weekly). The pilot had a duration of 18 months. After 18 months, 67% of employees reported having improved their work-life balance, and 33% of employees exhibited lower stress levels, while feelings of strength and vigor at work increased by 15% (Unilever, 2022).

These encouraging results induced Unilever Australia to follow the same path. Unilever Australia began its pilot in November 2022. The employees maintained 100% of their salaries, working 80% of the previous time. Each employee had the option to choose which day or hours they decided to take off.

2.2.1.3. Health benefits

Long working hours are associated with depressive states, coronary heart disease, and anxiety (Bannai & Tamakoshi, 2014). The World Health Organization stated that working 55 or more hours per week increases the risk of a stroke by 35% and by 17% the risk of dying from ischemic heart disease when compared to working 35-40 hours (World Health Organization, 2021). Working fewer hours while being paid the same allows employees to build and sustain healthy relationships, which in turn eases loneliness and contributes to their overall sense of happiness and well-being (Abraham, 2024).

In the pilot project developed in Portugal, the percentage of workers who rated their mental health as good or excellent doubled from 15 to 30% in six months (Gomes & Fontinha, 2024). The percentage of workers who rated their mental health as poor or fair decreased from 40 to 23%. The group of workers who rated their physical health as very good or excellent also experienced an increase, from 20% to 27%. Meanwhile, the number of workers who rated their physical health as poor or fair decreased, from 39% to 27%. A reduction in working hours helped workers improve their physical and mental health. Regarding the frequency of mental health-related symptoms, such as fatigue, loneliness, sleep problems, and depression, employees who reported feeling anxious decreased by 15 percentage points, fatigue by 22 percentage points, and depressive states by 11 percentage points (Gomes & Fontinha, 2024).

A study developed in the United Kingdom by Four-Day Week Global, published in February 2023, concluded that the frequency of reports regarding work stress and burnout declined, with 71% of employees showing lower levels of burnout. Workers also reported higher levels of satisfaction regarding their jobs, with an increase from 7,12 to 7,69 on a scale of 0 to 10 (Lewis et al., 2023).

2.2.1.4. Fewer costs

The shift to a Four-Day Workweek could represent fewer costs for companies (Araújo et al., 2024). One less workday would mean fewer costs for the company since there would be no need to use certain pieces of equipment, electricity, or water (Araújo et al., 2024).

The use of resources and raw materials will also decrease, supporting the efficient use of these resources and helping companies achieve their sustainable development goals (Spencer, 2022).

In the pilot project developed in Portugal, 40% of the managers recognized savings, primarily in energy and other expenses, related to the costs. Around 80% of managers financially rated the project as neutral (Gomes & Fontinha, 2024).

Figure 1: Advantages of 4DWW Identified in the Literature Review

Advantages	Motivation	Authors
Job Satisfaction	Reduced working hours create a feeling of meaningful work that can directly interfere with the perception of a meaningful life. Employees who are satisfied with their jobs tend to present better outcomes and exhibit higher productivity.	Andrade (2023) Pederson (2023)
Work-life Balance	The four-day workweek allows employees to have more time outside of work, spending their leisure time the way they prefer and improving the sense of balance between their work and personal life.	Barnes (2020) Gomes (2024)
Health Benefits	Working long hours increases the risk of depressive states, coronary heart disease, and anxiety. Poor work-life balance causes consequences in workers' health.	Baptiste (2008) Bannai (2014)
Fewer costs	An extra rest day would decrease the costs associated with equipment, electricity, or water.	Bakke (2005) Gomes (2024)

Source: Author's creation

2.2.2. Challenges of the Four-day Workweek

2.2.2.1. Difficulty in adapting

Many employees can accept transitioning into a Four-Day Workweek, mostly because of the extra day of rest, not necessarily because they will feel more satisfied in their workplace, but because it provides them with more time away from work (Bird, 2010). Campbell (2023) notes that implementing a Four-Day Workweek may pose challenges, including fatigue and scheduling issues. Managers may feel more tired when using condensed workweeks, as their responsibilities may not allow them to work only four days (Araújo et al., 2024).

Working longer hours to obtain an extra rest day may necessitate increased control measures to ensure that the work is being done, which could negatively impact the team (Campbell, 2023).

Companies must be aware that during the transition period to a Four-Day Workweek, productivity may temporarily decrease, as employees require time to adapt to the new model (Araújo et al., 2024).

Some adjustments need to be made to the work schedule, as seen in the pilot developed in Portugal. Human resources and organizational logistics will undergo significant changes, resulting in costs associated with employee training, updating internal systems, and restructuring work schedules (Araújo et al., 2024).

2.2.2.2. Sectors

Spencer (2022) notes that the Four-Day Workweek may have drawbacks, including reduced output and service quality in specific industries.

Employees from businesses with activities related to shipping and receiving must adapt to a five-day workweek to respond to incoming and outgoing goods (Bird, 2010). Maintenance employees must be available to work in the event of an unexpected situation. Hospitals, prisons, utilities, and law enforcement establishments cannot work four days instead of five (Bird, 2010). Careful planning and design thinking are essential for the implementation to be successful, ensuring both employee well-being and operational needs are met.

2.2.2.3. Non-consensual day off

The variation of the extra day off could represent some challenges for the company. There may be a need for an additional day off to be scheduled during the week, and employees could express their preference for the extra day of rest to be on Friday or Monday. Three consecutive days of rest could cause implications for the consensual acceptance of the Four-Day Workweek (Campbell, 2023). Kenney (1974) concluded that 68% of the respondents of a survey accepted a Four-Day Workweek (4 days with 10 hours of work) with Monday or Friday as the selected day off, and just 24% were in favour of a Four-Day Workweek if the days off were during the week.

2.2.2.4. Employee creativity

While some studies suggest that the Four-Day Workweek positively affects creativity, others indicate that it may interfere with employee collaboration. It limits the time given to brainstorming or sharing ideas. Employees' creativity also depends on other factors, such as innovative companies, openness to experimentation, and communication. Jobs that require high creativity may benefit from a shorter workweek, while others function better with a traditional schedule (Fathya et al., 2024).

Figure 2: Barriers of 4DWW identified in Literature Review

Challenges	Motivation	Authors
Difficulty in adapting	The adaptation period can increase employees' fatigue, and productivity can decrease. Managers can find it difficult to adapt their week into four days	Campbell (2023) Araújo (2024)
Sectors	Certain sectors cannot operate under a four-day workweek (prisons, utilities, hospitals), and others can find more difficulties while transitioning into Four-Day Workweek given certain work necessities	Bird (2010) Spencer (2022)
Non-consensual Day Off	Companies may prefer to choose the extra rest day in the middle of the week, while employees prefer it to be Monday or Friday. Creating a three-day weekend can create difficulties for companies.	Kenney (1974) Campbell (2023)
Employee Collaboration	Reducing the time employees spend with each other will decrease brainstorming time, which could affect the company's results. Jobs that require much creativity may not benefit from this transition.	Fathya (2024)

Source: Author's creation

2.3. Inconclusive results

2.3.1.1. Productivity

Productivity can be defined as quantifying the ability of a firm or economy to transform inputs into outputs (Del Gatto et al., 2011). The more productive a company is, the more wealth is created in a smaller amount of time (De Spiegelaere & Piasna, 2017). The impact of adopting a Four-Day Workweek on a company's productivity could be an important topic for discussion before implementing this change.

However, the effects of working hours on labor productivity are still unclear (Collewet & Sauermann, 2017). Traditionally, more working hours are associated with higher productivity because a larger quantity of inputs can be converted into outputs. Nonetheless, working longer hours increases fatigue and could negatively affect the quality of work, as well as raise the risk of accidents and sickness, which incur costs for the employer (Pencavel, 2014). According to this author, working up to 48 hours results in productivity proportional to the hours worked, but beyond 48 hours per week, the amount of work done per hour decreases. Spencer (2022) states that working fewer hours helps reduce fatigue and stress among employees, which boosts their focus and motivation, leading to better quality work and increased productivity. However, measuring individual productivity is challenging, so performance scales are more commonly used (Sauermann, 2023).

A study conducted by VoucherCloud (2018) in the United Kingdom revealed that the average office worker is only productive for 2 hours and 53 minutes of the day. This number is small when compared to the usual eight daily working hours.

To achieve the same level of output in a four-day, 32-hour workweek as in a five-day, 40-hour workweek, productivity would need to increase by 25% (Veal, 2022).

In August 2019, Microsoft Japan launched the “Work-Life Choice Challenge” to test the Four-Day Workweek and evaluate its benefits and limitations (Sosa, 2021). The company's productivity rose by 40%, and employees worked 25% fewer hours that month. Most results concerning the impact of a Four-Day Workweek on productivity remain inconclusive.

The economist Wernette (1968) stated that even if output per hour were raised, workers would still work more during a 40-hour week compared to a 32-hour week. A hospital department that introduced the Four-Day Workweek had only 56% of employees six months later wishing to continue with this method (Fottler, 1977).

The relationship between productivity and the Four-Day Workweek is complex, and further studies are needed to accurately measure its impact (Campbell, 2023).

2.3.1.2. Environmental impact

Regarding environmental impact, a Four-Day Workweek can contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions and energy consumption. Employees do not need to commute, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and pollution (Araújo et al., 2024). The energy consumption of the offices would also decrease, as electricity and heating would be required less (Fathya et al., 2024). However, this can be refuted by the fact that if all employees have different extra days of rest, the office will still need to be open, maintaining consumption (Kallis et al., 2023).

There could be a need to hire extra employees to maintain the workflow. In this case, commuting to the office would still occur, and the environmental benefit of having an extra day of rest would be negated (Kallis et al., 2023).

With more free time, employees would likely engage in activities they enjoy and are uncertain. It would be hard to predict whether the environmental impact would be positive or negative (Antal et al., 2021).

However, spending time at home is less efficient in terms of energy and water consumption, as these resources are shared when individuals are in the office (King & Bergh, 2017). Additionally, employees are likely to use their extra rest day for leisure activities, potentially increasing traffic and pollution associated with these activities (Bird, 2010).

3. Conceptual Model and Research Hypothesis

The primary objective of this dissertation is to determine whether the Four-Day Workweek can be implemented in Portugal and to understand workers' perspectives on this subject. In recent years, companies have had to revise their work methods and adapt to hybrid work arrangements due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Employees modified their routines and were given a whole new perspective on how and from where their work could be done. This could lead employees to feel the need to continue exploring alternative work arrangements.

The Four-Day Workweek enables employees to enjoy a more flexible schedule, giving them the freedom to pursue their passions, which can be reflected in their work. This dissertation aimed to gather opinions and perspectives from different workers about whether this approach could be effective in their environment and how it could be implemented to ensure a higher success rate.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the specific objective was then to identify the drivers and barriers associated with the Four-Day Workweek in Portugal. The research questions were then: what are the drivers associated with the 4DWW, which are the barriers, and which implementation measures should be followed?

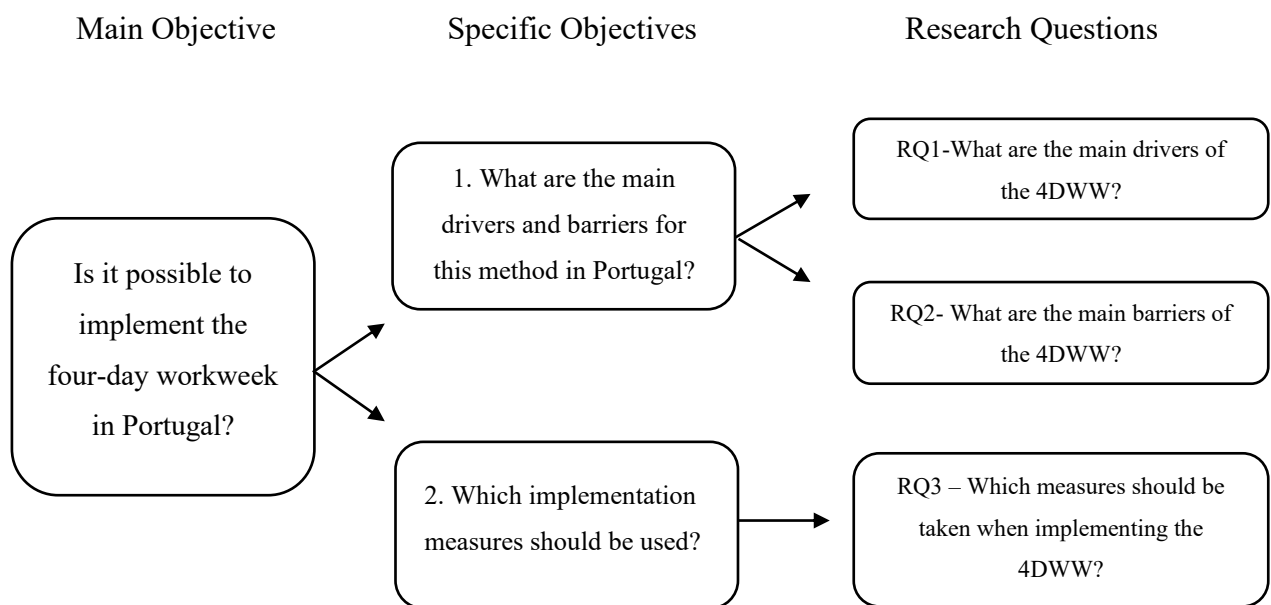


Figure 3: Conceptual model

Source: Author's creation

In this chapter, the objectives will be presented, along with the corresponding research questions. This study aims to address its primary objective, acknowledging the limitations that

can arise from the Four-Day Workweek, while also highlighting the points valued by a larger number of participants. It can also reveal what workers value more in their work and personal lives, as well as what changes they are not open to making, such as having an extra rest day or more free time.

3.1. Drivers of the Four-day Workweek

The fact that this model has attracted interest from several companies and been tested by some of them (Microsoft Japan, Unilever New Zealand and Australia, and the Pilot Project in Portugal) shows its potential benefits, which are likely to spark curiosity among those companies.

Regarding the results and the cited advantages, the most frequently mentioned were increased morale, higher productivity, better work-life balance, lower costs for companies, and reduced absenteeism (Campbell, 2022; Gomes & Fontinha, 2024).

The first goal of this dissertation is then to identify the benefits and positive aspects associated with the Four-Day Workweek from the workers' perspective. This will also help us understand what workers value in their workplaces nowadays and which changes they seek and value. Although the advantages of the Four-Day Workweek have been studied and related to this concept, there are few studies on this subject, especially in Portugal. Therefore, it is essential to understand which points are highlighted from the perspective of Portuguese workers.

As working hours have decreased over time, the current working hours are considerably lower than they were a century ago (Huberman & Minns, 2007). A comprehensive understanding of the factors that motivate this reduction from the employees' perspective, as well as the benefits it brings to their lives, can facilitate the adaptation of the work system in which they are part. Furthermore, it can help identify the factors that motivate employees in their work lives.

In this sense, we proposed to explore the following question: “What advantages do you associate with the Four-Day Workweek?”.

3.2. Barriers to the Four-Day Workweek

On the other hand, researching the negative perspectives or downsides associated with the Four-Day Workweek could be important for adapting its implementation to real and complex environments.

The existing Literature Review shows that workers with additional formal education are less likely to use a Four-Day Workweek (Hammermesh & Biddle, 2025). The main disadvantages/barriers stated by authors are fatigue and scheduling problems (Campbell, 2023), as well as reduced outputs and service quality (Spencer, 2022).

At first glance, the Four-Day Workweek can appear interesting and can stimulate the need to test it, but some problems can arise from this method. Addressing them from the beginning could help decrease them and guarantee better measures are taken upon implementation.

This leads to an interest in exploring this question to examine all factors that could prevent companies from adopting the Four-Day Workweek.

3.3. Implementation Measures

To understand the potential implementation of a Four-Day Workweek in Portugal, it is essential to determine whether employees can adopt this practice within their respective workplaces and the conditions under which it would be feasible. Conversely, it is imperative to ascertain the participants' understanding of the constraints and the reasons behind them, in addition to identifying the specific limitations.

It is essential, then, to assess which implementation measures could be beneficial in each participant's work environment, thereby creating the third research question.

The implementation measures and suggestions given by participants will then be the third research question.

4. Methodology

Qualitative methodology is more suitable when conducting studies that aim to answer “how” questions, rather than “how many” (Pratt, 2009). Since the primary goal of this dissertation is to determine whether and under what conditions implementing a Four-Day Workweek would be effective in Portugal, a qualitative methodology was chosen.

Qualitative research enables the collection of as many diverse opinions as possible regarding this subject, thereby enriching the study and allowing participants to explore the topic from their perspective.

When conducting qualitative research, it is important to make certain assumptions. First, we must assume that people in organizations are aware of their responsibilities and can clearly express their thoughts, intentions, and actions. Researchers should refrain from imposing preconceived notions or theories on the informants and should allow them to voice their perspectives during the initial stages of data collection and analysis. This approach fosters the discovery of new concepts rather than merely confirming existing ones (Gioia, 2012).

The interviewed professionals worked for distinct companies, having diverse backgrounds, areas of study, and working areas. This is an important factor, since it allows us to conclude how different areas of work could implement the Four-Day Workweek and how employees' perspectives vary depending on that factor.

After data collection, an analysis was performed to gather relevant information and categorize it, aiming to understand patterns and identify topics that were mentioned most often. It is important to note that all measures will be given proper consideration. To aid data analysis and draw conclusions, it would be helpful to consider how opinions are repeated and which are more likely to be effective in each area.

4.1. Participants

The participants (N = 18) work the standard 40-hour workweek and were selected to ensure diversity across various work sectors, occupations, and demographics. Since everyone can have an opinion and a perspective on this subject, the number of interviews was not predetermined. Interviews continued until responses began to repeat themselves (reach saturation) and no new information emerged. All participants expressed interest in the topic and acknowledged having heard about the Four-Day Workweek before. Several participants mentioned the pilot project developed in Portugal, with some sharing successful implementation stories from specific companies and countries.

The participants' ages range from 22 to 66 years old. The average age was 33 years ($M = 32.87$). Of the eighteen participants, 9 were males (50%) and 9 were females (50%).

The sectors of activity include mobility, chemical industry, telecommunication, consulting, services, accounting, state administration, technology, banking, marketing, healthcare, logistics, and communication.

Regarding the participants' level of education, eleven participants hold a bachelor's degree (61.11%), three have a master's degree (16.67%), one has a high school diploma (5.55%), and three have postgraduate degrees (16.67%).

The professional experience of participants ranges from those beginning their careers to those in leadership positions with over twenty years of experience.

Annex A presents a comprehensive overview of the demographic characteristics of each participant.

4.2. Data Collection

Potential participants were contacted by cell phone, and a brief explanation of the study was given. The interviewed employees were arranged by convenience and were mostly from my social and professional circle, as well as friends or family of friends. Twenty-three people were contacted, twenty-two accepted to participate in the study, but only eighteen interviews were conducted, due to availability of participants.

The interviews were conducted to gather data to help answer the research questions and understand the drivers and barriers that each person associates with this subject.

The only criterion for participant selection was that they were full-time employees working in Portugal, adhering to the standard 40-hour workweek.

The interviews were conducted between February and April of 2025. The average duration was 20 minutes. Participants were able to answer and develop their thoughts during that period. Prior to the interview, a script outlining the primary topics to be addressed was distributed to the participants. This was done to ensure that they could deliberate on the subject matter, as the study focused on structured responses rather than spontaneous answers. The script can be found in Annex D.

All questions were asked openly, with the aim of not influencing the perspective of each participant. Some participants expressed doubts about how this method is implemented, and a brief explanation was provided, carefully avoiding any influence on their ideas.

4.3. Interview Procedure

The procedure for data collection in this study involved planning the interviews and developing a script that was later applied. The script was elaborated to ensure that the research questions would be answered, focusing on the drivers and barriers from the employees' perspective, as well as the recommended implementation measures.

The script was followed; however, if needed, additional questions related to what the participant was saying would be asked.

Interviews were conducted through Teams or a telephone call and recorded for posterior transcription. A brief explanation of the study's objectives was provided to each participant to help them understand the goals and what was expected of them. Confidentiality of the audio recording was assured to each participant.

At the beginning of the interview, participants would share their academic and professional background, how their work is organized, regarding working hours, model of work, such as hybrid or remote, and also if the Four-Day Workweek has ever been talked within their company and if so, by which part of the organization and what were the thoughts regarding this model.

The interview would then follow, aiming to understand the participant's perspective on this subject and identify the advantages and disadvantages associated with it. The adaptation process and measures to facilitate the implementation of this method were also addressed. Several topics were debated, including productivity, talent attraction and retention, and the potential impact of a Four-Day Workweek on employee compensation.

In the end, participants were invited to share their thoughts on the Four-Day Workweek and offer suggestions for the study, informally.

4.4. Data Analysis

In 1997, Shapiro and Markoff proposed a minimal definition of content analysis: “any methodological measurement applied to text (or other symbolic materials) for social science purposes” (Shapiro & Markoff, 1997). Content analysis also assumes that groups of words reveal underlying themes and that co-occurrences of keywords can be interpreted as reflecting the association between concepts (Duriau, 2007). Regarding management research, content analysis offers a replicable methodology for accessing individual or collective information, such as values, intentions, and attitudes (Carley, 1997; Kabanoff, 1996). For this study, content analysis was the chosen method.

After the data collection, interviews were transcribed. The first were transcribed with the tool “transcribe” from Microsoft Word, and then using “TurboScribe”, an online tool that transcribes audio files. All interviews were then reviewed, and corrections were made, if necessary.

Then, using the software MAXQDA 24, interviews were codified. Codes were created for relevant information. Three main categories were created: advantages and disadvantages perceived by the employees, as well as implementation measures suggested by the participants. In Annexes E and F, the codification system is illustrated.

These categories align with the study's objectives, and the subcategories were created based on the responses. A total of 64 codes were generated. Of these, twenty-one relate to the changes needed to implement the Four-Day Workweek. Twenty-two disadvantages and twenty-one advantages were identified. These categories were analyzed, allowing the interview data to be transformed into meaningful information that aided in interpreting the results.

A dictionary of categories was created and can be found in Annex C.

4.5. Study Quality

Gioia proposed a methodology to ensure the quality and fidelity of qualitative research results. First is the development of the Research Design, which articulates the phenomenon to be studied and the research questions to be answered through the study. Then, data collection involves giving voice to informants and preserving flexibility to adjust interview protocols based on their responses. Data Analysis will enable researchers to maintain the integrity of first-order terms and then compile them into themes (Gioia, 2012).

Since all participants were promised anonymity, the interview transcriptions will not be shared. In the Results chapter, the categories and conclusions will be presented, along with examples of what participants mentioned about each topic.

As previously mentioned, interviews were only conducted until new information was shared. Since participants began to repeat themselves, starting with interviews 13 and 14, a few more interviews were conducted to ensure there was sufficient information for analysis.

5. Results

5.1. Drivers of the Four-Day Workweek

One of the objectives of the interviews was to understand workers' perspectives on the main benefits and what might motivate companies to adopt this method. The participants shared various viewpoints, with several individuals repeating the same opinion multiple times. The following chart provides a summary of the mentioned drivers and their frequency.

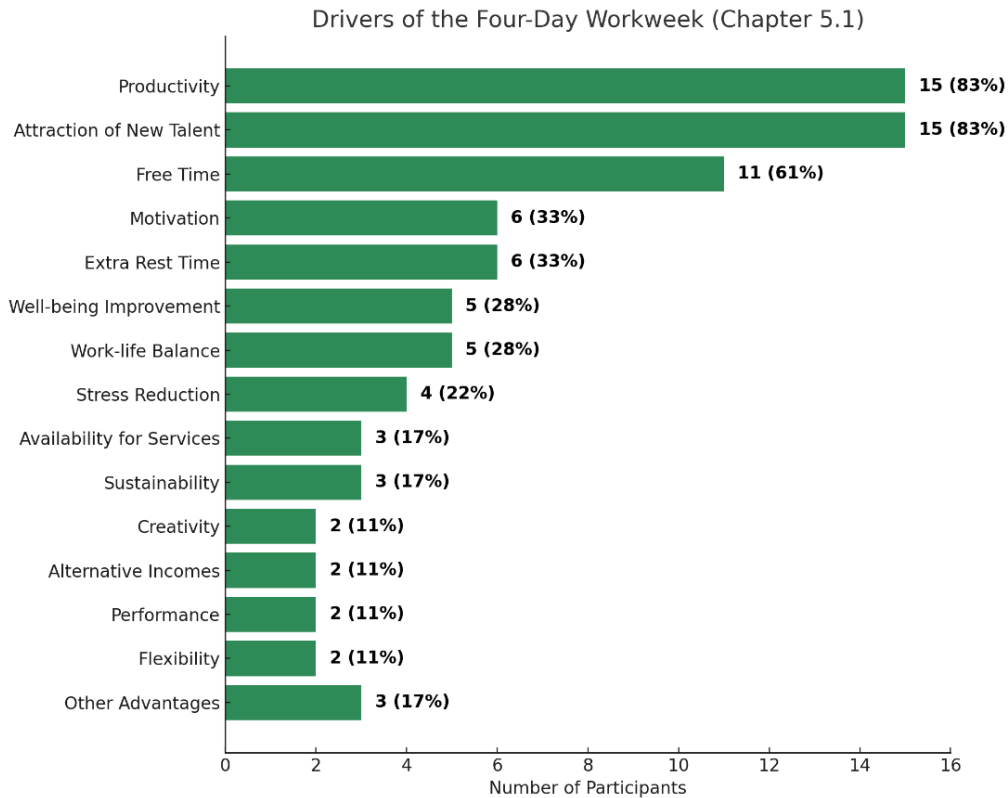


Figure 4: Drivers mentioned during Data Collection

Source: Author's creation

Productivity

The most frequently cited benefit was that of enhanced productivity. The participants hypothesized that their productivity would increase if the Four-Day Workweek were implemented. Fifteen participants, constituting 83.33% of the total interviewed, attested to this enhancement. Participants emphasized that having one extra rest day would make them feel calmer and better prepared for the working days, thereby increasing productivity (P2, P4, P5, P10, P11, P18).

“We have more free time to do personal things, don't we? On the other hand, it allows us, as I was going to say, to do things from a personal point of view that give us greater satisfaction,

in other words, I believe that this then interferes with motivation. In other words, a person working fewer days, or having more days off, also ends up motivating them and making them more productive on the fewer days they work.” (P18) Participants correlated their motivation with the productivity they exert.

Some participants mentioned that the workflow fluctuates depending on the week, and sometimes, even though their daily schedule is eight hours, there are periods of the day in which they do not have work to do. “But I agree, I think it would be advantageous, and I even think you would produce a lot more than having to be at work all those hours, and sometimes it is not even justified for you to be there all those hours.” (P8) Productivity on those days will not be high. Implementing the Four-Day Workweek and organizing tasks that each employee must complete daily could help employees feel that their work is more valued.

Attraction of New Talent

Fifteen participants have indicated that companies could attract new talent by implementing a Four-Day Workweek. When presented with a choice between two companies with identical terms, one adhering to the conventional 40 hours per week, and the other offering a Four-Day Workweek, thirteen participants showed interest in the four-day option. This is approximately 72.22% of the total number of participants.

“I’d probably change it to four days. I give more importance to an extra free day than to working, for example, an extra hour or two a day.” (P17)

Free Time

Another commonly mentioned benefit was the availability of free time. Eleven participants expressed satisfaction with the idea of having an extra rest day to do what they enjoy. Four participants (P4, P9, P13, P16) said that this additional free time could be spent with their families. Participant nine, who is a bank manager, stated, “I used to work maybe an average of 10/11, sometimes 12 hours, and very, very, very often. (...). I honestly see, I see, I see advantages in the application of the four-day week because this allows for an increase in the worker's rest period, naturally enabling more time to be spent with the family, especially those with children...”. Another participant (P16) mentioned, “And with this extra day I also see the advantage of having more free time for personal activities, leisure, and family, which will also help reduce stress and burnout.” The fact that employees spend their free time surrounded by their families could have a positive impact on their work performance in the days to follow.

Motivation

Motivation was also cited by six participants. “And then I think the fact that you have an extra day on your day off makes you feel more motivated and better able to carry out your duties. I think that is it. The main advantage is the time available and the motivation this generates in the person.” (P12)

Extra rest time

Six participants mentioned that working only four days a week gives them extra rest time, which they believe would be beneficial for their work. One participant (P17) even stated that he would feel significantly more rested overall. Another (P5) stated, “I would say that it also results from being able to rest better on the weekend. Because a person only has Saturday, and then on Sunday, they already feel the pressure of having to work the next day. I think so, I think so.” This relates to participant four, who mentioned, “For example, I notice that if I know that particular week, or even if I am going on vacation or something, it seems like a person even gives more of their all to be more productive, right?” Having an extra rest day can motivate people to complete tasks, knowing they will have more free time for activities they enjoy.

Well-being improvement

Well-being improvement was another factor that was cited by five participants (P4, P11, P12, P15, P16). Participant 11 said, “I think another very good thing about the four-day work is having well-being, right? (...) What people are doing is making your employees happier, more excited, and the truth is that when people are well, they work much better.”

Work-life balance

Work-life balance was also cited by five participants (P3, P6, P7, P11, P17). Participant six mentioned during the interview that “(...) has many advantages because it brings balance between personal, family, and professional life. My generation [52 years old] has many characteristics of...we are very focused on our careers and work, we value material goods to the detriment of supporting our families, and I am perfectly aware of this. We do not keep up with our children's growth, we are very absent...with many hours of work, busy, and we occupy many consecutive days of the week. Four days is the ideal time, but this depends on each organization and the workload of each team. Now, there is no doubt that it will bring much more satisfaction to the team that carries out the tasks, because they can balance and take care of their families more or dedicate some more time to sports, which is beneficial to our health, we can relieve some of the stress, I consider that these are only advantages.” This participant is the director of a shopping centre and leads a big team. It is important to understand that workers

from “superior” management positions recognize the positive effects of the Four-Day Workweek and the impact that it could have on society and employees’ lives.

Stress Reduction

Four participants mentioned that a Four-Day Workweek could help decrease stress levels (P6, P7, P15, P16), and three participants (P6, P7, P16) stated that it could bring more satisfaction into workers' lives. “Now there is no doubt that it is going to bring much more satisfaction to the team that carries out the tasks, because they can balance and accompany the family more or dedicate some more time to sport, which is for the benefit of our health, hmmm, we can relieve a bit of stress, that's what I consider to be the only advantages.” (P6)

Availability

Another factor mentioned by three participants (P2, P5, P14) was the ability to attend services that are usually more difficult to access due to their schedules, such as banks, doctors' appointments, or the post office. Participant fourteen mentioned, “And what I feel is that since I work from nine to six, there are several types of services that I cannot go to during the week, because they work the same hours as I do. Thus, it is impossible, for example, if I need to go to an appointment. I can leave early or present a justification, but I always have to be absent to go somewhere. Now it even came up, I had to go and pick up something at the post office, and it was super complicated, because there is no time to get to these places.”

Sustainability

Regarding the sustainability factor, three participants (P4, P7, P14) mentioned that the Four-Day Workweek could be beneficial for the environment. As participant seven said, “Yes, and there are, and there are also those who say, and I also share this opinion, that if this were generalized, that for the environment itself, there would also be some benefits due to the reduction in traffic flow on the roads. We have seen, for example, that on weekends, there is usually less traffic, except in the summer and during the bathing season, where there is more traffic.” Related to this point, participants 7 and 14 also mentioned that a Four-Day Workweek would help companies decrease their operational costs, as the number of employees in the office would decrease. Participant fourteen said, “And so, people, well, it's like this, they have their computers on, they go to the bathroom, they use the water, that is all. Things that you might not think about on a day-to-day basis, but that have a huge impact.”

Creativity

Two participants (P7, P11) considered that the Four-Day Workweek could be beneficial for work that requires mental effort or a constant flow of creativity. Participant eleven said, “ I think that jobs that require more creativity, for example, can make you feel very seen. Because

there is much procrastination, moments of pause are super important for you to be able to come up with ideas.” Moreover, participant eleven said, “I see, for example, that in companies with a huge flow of intellectual work...ah, the benefits could be interesting. Because people are more...and, and who do not have that task that is to be performed at that, at that time, therefore, yes, for example, in intellectual property, programming, research and development because people have a much freer mind, therefore, they are not so tired and, and then you can see an increase in productivity (...)”.

Alternative Incomes

The Four-Day Workweek could incentivize employees to use their free time to explore or create alternative income streams. Participants seven and twelve both mentioned this. “Because then people can also have others, that is, the time they have available can be useful to generate other income, not just within the company.” (P12)

Performance

Two participants (P1, P9) suggested that the performance would also improve. Participant one owns a car-rental company and highlights the importance of employee motivation and productivity for the business. The participant states, “Naturally, I think that in all organizations, but in the service sector, even more so, and then motivated people, naturally, they have much more, much better productivity, better performance, and it is good for everyone.”

Flexibility

Flexibility was also an advantage cited by two participants (P2, P8) who valued the liberty to manage their work within the expected working hours/workweek. The Four-Day Workweek could bring more flexibility to offices and offer employees the freedom to manage their work schedules more effectively with their personal lives.

Other Advantages

Participants cited three other advantages. They were only mentioned once.

Participant eleven cited efficiency as another advantage of the four-day workweek. “I plan my work for the week, okay? It happens. If I have one less day of work, probably the hours I am working are more efficient (...)”

Participant fourteen mentioned another two advantages. The participant considers that a Four-Day Workweek would reflect a greater focus on work, and also highlights the time saved on commuting to the office.

5.2. Barriers to the Four-day workweek

Although participants showed strong enthusiasm and interest in adopting a Four-Day Workweek, they also pointed out some drawbacks. These will be discussed in the next subchapter. The graphic illustrates which barriers were most commonly linked to this approach.

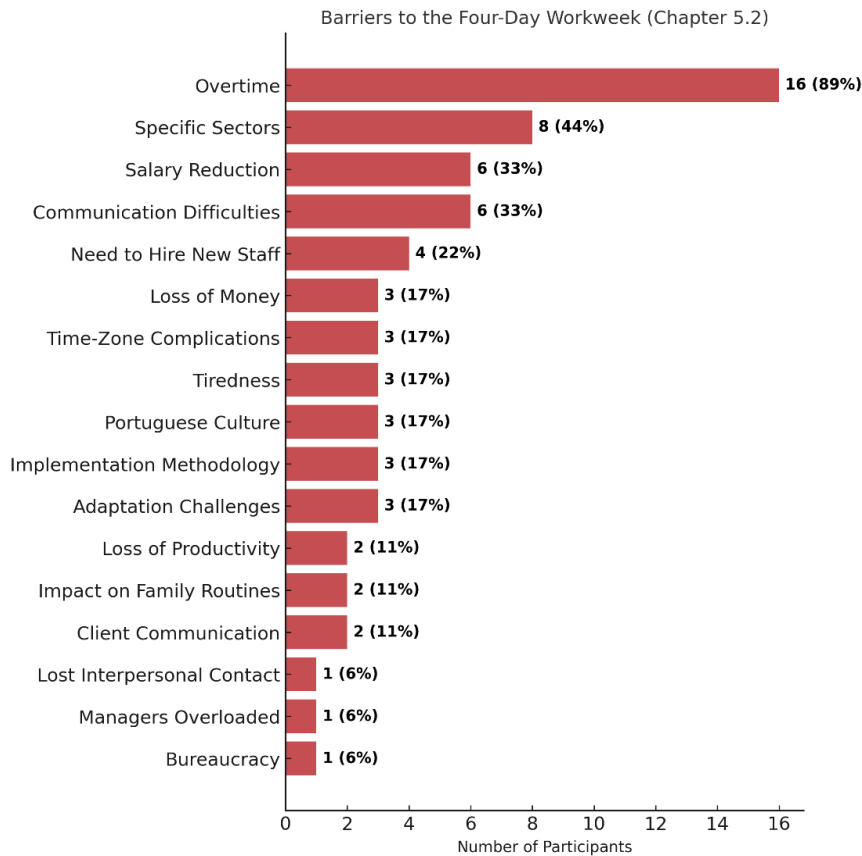


Figure 5: Barriers mentioned during Data Collection

Source: Author's creation

Overtime

The most commonly mentioned disadvantage was the overtime that would likely be needed during the four days of work to compensate for the extra rest day. Sixteen participants (P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P18), representing 88,88% of all participants, admitted that the extra hours on the four working days could negatively affect the supposed goal of the Four-Day Workweek, which is to give employees more free time and better work-life balance (as cited by eleven and five participants, respectively).

As participant three said, “I think so, but it depends a bit on how it's done. Some places are experimenting with this, and some take a day off. Others change the hours. For example, instead of working 8 hours, you work 10, which could be 10 hours a day, and that could be a lot despite the 3 days off. I think there must be a balance, and it's a matter of experience between companies

to figure out what works for each company and its employees. Personally, if I worked 10 hours a day, I would reach a point where I would be a bit more tired and less productive. But in the beginning, I think so, I think it would be more worthwhile.”

The fact that the volume of work would not decrease with a decrease in working hours could generate stress for employees, who have the same amount of work to do, but in less time. “What I associate today is the volume of work we have. If someone told me that from next month, you would only work 4 days, I knew that I would accumulate much work, and then the 8 hours a day that should be correct in those 4 days would not be there. My workload would not reduce, it would accumulate, and I would have to respond in more hours per day; that is what was going to happen.” (P6)

Sector

Eight participants (P2, P4, P7, P8, P11, P15, P16) discussed how implementing the Four-Day Workweek can be challenging in specific sectors. As participant two said, “Not all sectors can do this, and there is a certain loss of efficiency. For example, more time-sensitive things, you will lose some efficiency if you take a day off work, right, you will not deliver as quickly.”

Participants four, fifteen, and sixteen mentioned the healthcare area, participant seven agriculture, participant eleven caregivers, and participant sixteen mentioned emergency services.

Salary Reduction

Salary reduction was a disadvantage cited by six participants (P2, P3, P6, P7, P9, P12). These participants mentioned that the salaries in Portugal are low compared to other countries and that a significant percentage of the population lives on the minimum wage, which could be a factor inhibiting people from accepting the Four-Day Workweek. As participant nine said, “I think so, especially since we are a country where salaries are low. If salaries are already low, people still have to take a pay cut just because they have one more day off. But will they make up for that day off at work on other days? No, no, I disagree with that and I think that would be, it would be, in fact, disadvantageous for people. Many people, no, no, no, no, it is not that they would not want to, but they could not accept that naturally, it is not that they didn't want to.”

In the following sub-chapter, the salary reduction will be discussed. Participants were asked if they would accept the Four-Day Workweek, even though it implied a pay cut (although it isn't supposed to happen, as productivity levels are supposed to be maintained).

Communication Difficulties

Communication difficulties were another topic mentioned by six participants (P1, P3, P11, P12, P16, P18). Participant one admitted that implementing a Four-Day Workweek would likely require hiring more workers. That would contribute to more difficulties regarding employee communication. Participant three discussed the necessity of implementing rotating shifts to accommodate the Four-Day Workweek. He mentioned that since his work involves continuous communication with clients, it may be necessary to review the work done by colleagues to ensure that they are aware of the problems discussed and the solutions presented. This could imply more time spent communicating with colleagues and create a few difficulties. Participants eleven, sixteen, and eighteen talked from the same perspective. Their work requires communication and approval from clients, and implementing a Four-Day Workweek could imply more reunions and the creation of a strategy for clients not to realize their absence from the company (probably rotating shifts). These rotating shifts could then create difficulties in communication between colleagues and meeting schedules.

Hiring new employees

As previously mentioned, the need to hire new employees may arise from the implementation of the Four-Day Workweek. Four participants (P1, P7, P13, P17) admitted to this hypothesis.

Participant thirteen said, “But, if we were to implement this, there would have to be a... A higher turnover, they would have to hire more people, to cover the days that we are not working.” Companies may perceive this as a negative point, as they would incur additional personal expenses.

Loss of money and Productivity

Two barriers that are associated with each other and are highlighted from the company's perspective are financial loss and productivity decline. Participants 11, 13, and 17 mentioned the loss of money, and participants 7 and 17 mentioned the loss of productivity.

The fact that companies have employees working fewer hours implies a financial loss. Participant eleven works at a digital marketing agency and mentioned, “Agencies end up with employees working far fewer hours per week, and agencies are losing much money. Thus, I do not think that this is one of the most useful businesses for me. They would completely change the way they were selling their resources.”

Participant seventeen showed concerns regarding productivity because, as he said, “If there is no salary reduction associated with the reduction in the number of hours, for example, you will lose work done. Unless people come much more motivated and willing to work on other

days.” Understanding whether employees will come to work more motivated and perform better is essential to determining whether productivity levels will be maintained.

Participant two also mentioned that the company might incur more expenses.

Time-zone complications

Some employees mentioned that their work involves communication and cooperation with companies from other countries. In this case, the three participants (P2, P3, P12) who addressed this topic work with companies or clients from the United States. The time zone factor could also interfere with the implementation of a Four-Day Workweek. One participant (P2), though, mentioned that in her area of work, if planning was done properly for each day, and communication was clear within the team and with clients, it would be easy to coordinate tasks and predict what would be necessary to do each day. Another participant (P12) said that, given her area of work and the direct communication with the United States, it was necessary to have rotating rest days, so that someone was always in the office analyzing the data and doing the necessary work.

Tiredness

Tiredness was reported by three participants (P3, P12, P16). Working extra hours or having work not well distributed over the working days can cause employees to feel more tired. Understanding whether an extra rest day can compensate for the extra working hours is essential. “The disadvantages, as I was saying, were the fact that there could be general fatigue among employees..., the working hours were not so well distributed, because there is only so much that a person can do during a working day, there are certain jobs that simply do not, it does not work and you end up working in quotes, without doing much and you end up not being productive, not necessarily because you cannot or you are tired, but simply because the limit of the working day was that and that can, without a doubt, end up being a disadvantage.”

Portuguese culture

Three participants (P12, P13, P16) viewed the Portuguese culture as a barrier to the Four-Day Workweek. This topic will be further explored when discussing the opinions that participants shared at the end of the interviews. Nevertheless, participants twelve, thirteen, and sixteen mentioned that the mentality and way of working of the Portuguese could interfere with the Four-Day Workweek.

Implementation methodology

As noted by participants, the way companies implement this workweek could impact their success or failure. “If you suddenly have to work 10 hours a day, this advantage no longer applies. In other words, it depends a lot on what companies decide concerning this.” (P11)

Participant fifteen mentioned, “I think there would be a greater concentration (of work), and I think it might not be beneficial. Moreover, it could increase stress on those days.”

On the other hand, participant four recognized the increase in working hours over the four days but assumed that this fact would not interfere with his opinion regarding the Four-Day Workweek. “I do not see this as a disadvantage for me, but I believe that there are people for whom it might not be so good to work, perhaps two more hours a day, because then it might impact, say, for example, picking up the kids from school, something like that, for them it might be a disadvantage to have to work more during the day, because it might have an impact on their personal life.”

Adaptation

Three participants mentioned that the adaptation to the Four-Day Workweek could present some difficulties for companies. As participant four said “ Companies have to adapt because their work rhythm, their core business, does not allow, let us say, a discontinuity, that people during the week, that is, having a time lag of people during the week or else, it may not be a disadvantage, they also adapt, because they can, they can manage to have those weeks with 4 days the same, right?”

Companies must ensure that they are prepared to implement a Four-Day Workweek and have adequate measures in place to do so.

Impact on family routines

Two additional participants (P8, P11) mentioned that working 10 hours a day could impact their families' routines, and their schedule management might need to change.

Communication with clients

Two participants mentioned that clients often struggle to contact companies or do not receive responses. Companies should inform clients in advance about upcoming changes and, if needed, ensure someone is always available to answer questions and offer assistance.

The implementation was discussed with two participants (P11, P16). They acknowledged that the implementation strategies are crucial to ensuring the best possible outcomes from the Four-Day Workweek. “The challenges in implementation are also there. Because the transition to a reduced working week requires significant changes in organizational culture and also in internal processes, which can sometimes be complex and require some time to adapt.” (P16)

Loss of interpersonal contact

Participant six mentioned the loss of interpersonal contact. The main factor is already the automation of processes, which decreased the interaction between employees but, with the Four-Day Workweek, those interactions could decrease even more “Teams increasingly do our

main work, summaries after meetings are sent by email for the person to validate and no, there is no travel, nor is there a physical presence at the meeting. There are also disadvantages. We lose a little bit here, the connection of being side by side with people, and I also think that this is very important. Sometimes when the person is face-to-face, they gain more empathy, and we end up having a closer relationship. It is not like just holding meetings on computers.”

Managers

Participant fourteen mentioned two different perspectives regarding the approach of the leaders. Managers could feel overworked since they would need to adjust their approach to working and how they make decisions on a day-to-day basis. The timings would also change, and it could be difficult for them to adapt to the new system.

That could lead to the other disadvantage mentioned by this participant, which is managers putting more pressure on employees. They would expect workers to complete tasks in four days that were previously completed in five days. “I think there may be more pressure from management to continue doing the same kind of things we did in five days, and now in four. So, mainly we have to do things faster and do things better, right?” (P14)

Bureaucracy

Participant one discussed two different barriers from an administrative perspective. Firstly, the bureaucracy that this change could cause. The participant mentioned that his company has around 42 workers and that, over 50 workers, the legislation has undergone changes that the company had to adopt. If the Four-Day Workweek were to be applied, new workers would need to be hired and would certainly surpass the 50-worker mark.

Another factor mentioned by this participant was the need to invest in training for new workers, which would create additional costs for the company.

5.3. Implementation measures

Another topic discussed during the interviews was the implementation measures that participants considered relevant and would help adapt to the Four-Day Workweek.

When asked if it was possible to implement a Four-Day Workweek in their current work situation, fifteen participants (representing 83.33% of the sample) said yes, and three said that it was not possible (16.67%).

The participants who said no were participants 6, 7, and 18. Participant six holds a senior management position and admits that the company is not yet ready for this change, but assures that activities and work methods are heading in that direction. “The company, nowadays

adopting the 4-day week, cannot, cannot, but I think we are moving in that direction because we are noticing a lot of restructuring of the central departments.”

Participant seven works as an accountant for different companies and does not think it is possible to decrease his work rhythm to four days. “Well, in the context in which I work, no, because even so, sometimes the five are not enough for me and I have to work on Saturdays. This is based on my own experience. Of course, this ultimately follows on from what we discussed a little while ago. If I reduced my, my, my, my flow, my, my workflow, of course, then I could, but by reducing my workflow I would also reduce my income flow...”

Participant eighteen works at a consulting company and says that she cannot work one less day.

Salary

All participants were asked their opinion on the Four-Day Workweek if that implied having to reduce their wages proportionally to the fewer hours worked. Of fourteen participants, six admitted that they would accept the Four-Day Workweek even though it implied receiving less (P8, P10, P11, P12, P15, P18). Five participants stated that the cut in their wages would deter them from accepting the 4DWW (P3, P5, P6, P16, P17), and three participants (P2, P13, P14) expressed concern that the cut would not compensate for the benefits they would obtain from the 4DWW. As participant fourteen mentioned, “Because, well, since I love what I do, I think it costs less, perhaps, than someone who does not like what they do as much.” This reflects the fact that when workers enjoy their work, they might not want to work less.

All participants were then asked to suggest implementation measures for adopting a Four-Day Workweek, which will now be presented.

Extra free-day

Concerning the additional rest day, respondents were invited to suggest how this could be more effectively implemented in their respective environments.

Three participants (P12, P17, P18) suggested that it would be better if all team members had the same extra free day. On the contrary, participant 11 said that it would be better if all the team members had different free days.

Nine participants (P2, P3, P5, P10, P11, P14, P15, P16, P17) admitted a preference for a fixed rest day. Some admitted that they appreciated it if it were Monday or Friday. Two participants (P8, P12) suggested that it would be better if the free day were on a rotating basis. The other two participants (P4, P18) said that it was indifferent to them.

Each team and department should understand the needs and conditions of their work and determine how the free day would be implemented.

Different organization

Eight participants (P1, P3, P8, P10, P12, P13, P14, P17) mentioned the fact that the organization of the company will need to change. Participants mentioned that tasks needed to be objectively defined, and measures should be established to ensure that productivity is not affected by this change. Managers should define which tasks are likely to change regularly.

Track results

Seven participants (P6, P8, P9, P10, P12, P18) acknowledged the need to track results and determine whether the impact of the Four-day Workweek on teams and companies is positive or negative. As participant ten said “And, and, little by little things can go back to how they were, but I think that initially there has to be a more, more frequent review of how... the productivity indexes and metrics that the company follows to, to evaluate success, to evaluate how the turnover is going, things like that... I think that a, a continuous, a continuous evaluation of these metrics initially and comparing them with what was previously, can be a good indicator of whether it is working.”

Home office

Seven participants (P2, P4, P8, P12, P15, P16, P18) admitted that home office (hybrid work) could help implement the Four-Day Workweek. Workers highlighted the time saved by working from home and not having to spend time commuting to the office. If the four days of work would imply a schedule of more than the usual eight hours, participant eighteen said, “But it is true and I agree 100%, even so, for example, in my case where I have just worked more hours, practically every day in the office, I do it regardless of being away from home. It would not matter if it were to ensure that I had another day off. It would not matter. However, working from home would be a great advantage, especially when it's necessary to work longer hours. I think that this is a general opinion.”

Planning

Planning was also mentioned seven times (P2, P5, P6, P12, P14, P15, P16). As participant five said, “X goals for that day or for that week, set based on...the 4 days, instead of 5 days.” Companies should adapt what is expected from their employees to the four days. Participant fifteen had the same opinion: “Do more planning, perhaps, that is, planning, obviously, with fewer days would have to be done, that is, they would have to take that into account, that is, plan what is done each day.”

Automation of processes

Six participants (P1, P6, P7, P9, P15, P16) stated that automating processes would be beneficial. As participant nine said, “And to implement the 4-day week in banking, banks would have to

continue investing in the advancement of technology, allowing the automation of as many operations as possible, right, as well as continuing to invest in strengthening the technological capacity of the clients.”

Participant nine shared the same idea but with a concern, “I do not know why if we, one, one, one of the possibilities is, well, we will increasingly have robotic work, we will have tools, therefore, with artificial intelligence and that kind of thing, but I have a big fear, which is that people will start to be replaced by machines and instead of having 4 days, we will end up having no days at all, quite honestly.”

Monitoring workers

Monitoring workers and understanding their feelings about the adaptation period, as well as gathering their feedback, could be beneficial for companies, according to five participants (P10, P12, P15, P17, P18). Participant twelve stated that nowadays, there are no regular meetings, and scheduling them once a week or once every two weeks could help monitor results. Participant fifteen also said that a more regular “check-up” could be positive. Participant eighteen said, “Furthermore, perhaps ensuring monitoring, I do not know exactly how, I imagine monitoring by directors or managers, to ensure that this change would not interfere with the team's operations, on the contrary, to assess the levels of productivity and customer satisfaction at the end of the period.”

Test period

Three participants (P3, P12, P13) considered it relevant to have a test before implementing the Four-Day Workweek, to understand which measures should be implemented. Participant three even suggested to start “cutting” the working hours and start having a four-and-a-half days workweek “In my case, I think that changes had to be made gradually and somewhat experimentally, for example, starting slowly, like, for example, working four and a half days a week. Working, for example, on Fridays you only work in the morning and distribute the other working hours by 1 hour more per day, for example, I think that would be possible and... it was a change that had to be made gradually by the company, for example, maybe doing a month starting another normal month, testing the waters, seeing how things work. It has to be a process that I think needs to be done calmly, because rushing things all of a sudden can be a huge shock for both companies and workers who have a hard time adapting and, or they can be caught off guard and become either very overwhelmed or very tired or it can be a very different agitation in their day to day that can impact both productivity and even the well-being and personal life of workers.”

Communicating with clients and suppliers

Communication with clients was also referred to twice. They should be informed about the changes and what to expect from the company. Open communication can help ensure that clients have no questions regarding the Four-day Workweek. “There would have to be communication with customers, for those who were here on a project or moving, so to speak. Well, as I say, I think it would be difficult. In the case of my company, it would be challenging to have a fixed day, because one less day of work would have a significant impact on our customers. However, if it were in this way of guaranteeing a rotation, I believe that customers would welcome the idea more.” (P18)

Communication with suppliers was also mentioned twice, by participants two and fifteen.

Trust

Two participants (P8, P10) highlighted the importance of trust between managers/superiors and their employees. Participant ten said “Now I think I think it can be easily, the four-day week can be easily implemented, ensuring that there is confidence from the managers that the team continues to deliver good work.”

Flexibility

Flexibility was also mentioned twice (P7, P16). “As the nature of my work involves campaign management, client relationships, and coordination with internal teams, this can allow for some flexibility, especially if the company adopts these practices, to maintain productivity and quality of service.” (P16)

Expectation management

The notion of expectation management was highlighted by participants two and five from a managerial perspective. “So I think it's just a matter of changing daily expectations.” (P5)

Other Barriers

Four other aspects were mentioned only once, by different participants. Improvement of time management (P16), creation of a regulation that defines the rules and the aspects that change within the company (P8), assuring that all the companies from the group shift to a Four-Day Workweek at the same time, to be fair to all employees (P6) and a study beforehand to understand the needs of each team and assure that those needs are met with the Four-Day Workweek.

5.4. Participants' Opinions

At the end of the interviews, as previously mentioned, participants were asked if they would like to discuss anything else related to this subject or if they had an opinion that had not been shared before. Seven participants had something to say.

Reduction of hours before retirement

Participant eight suggested that implementing a Four-Day Workweek for employees over fifty or fifty-five could be beneficial for both the individual and the company. This idea was based on the belief that the measure would help retain employees for a longer period.

Where to stop?

Participant ten mentioned that even though he liked the thought of a Four-Day Workweek, he felt that in the long term, people would then want to work three days. He mentioned the reduction of the workweek from six to five days and the constant need to work less.

Portuguese culture

Participants twelve and thirteen talked about the “Portuguese culture “and the way of working of the Portuguese. Participant thirteen mentioned that “When someone is on vacation, they say, oh, you are on vacation again, I do not know why you are working. I think that if we were to include these four days, we would have to modify the Portuguese culture slightly, and the traditional one, which emphasizes that life is not just about work. I think it is more like that, yes.” They admitted that the Portuguese are against “revolutionary” ideas, and that could interfere with the Four-Day Workweek. Participant twelve also said, “But sometimes here in Portugal, it doesn't, it seems that sometimes work also involves a small quantity of socializing, which is about socializing and not socializing after work. Right. Furthermore, that is why I think the Portuguese culture needs to change. Moreover, I do not know if we are ready for that, because culture does not change easily.”

Participant seventeen mentioned a “chronic lack of productivity,” and did not know if working less would make people more productive on the days they work or if it would just be an incentive to slack off even more. He also mentioned, “And there are countries where I can see that this could work very well. In Portugal, I have some doubts, but also, if it has never been tried.”

Pilot project

Participant sixteen mentioned, “No, I just want to say that it is an interesting project. It is possible in my area. I also think it is important to do a pilot project to start a testing phase, to see if it is going well, what needs to be improved, and to evaluate the impacts and adjust as necessary.”

Economically positive

Participant eighteen said, “There is much complexity here, but in my opinion it depends a lot on the sector of activity, the type of work, and the reality of each company, which is a shame, because, after all, I think that from an economic point of view, this change could be quite positive and make people feel, sorry, motivated.”

6. Discussion

This chapter aims to determine whether the findings of the interviews align with the existing literature review presented in Chapter Two.

As previously mentioned, the objectives were to identify which drivers and barriers were associated with the Four-Day Workweek, as well as the implementation measures that should be taken.

These interviews enabled a deeper understanding of the employees' opinions regarding the 4DWW and whether, from their perspective, it would be possible to implement this methodology in their work environment.

The interviews provided information that was mostly consistent with the existing literature review. Most participants reported having heard of the Four-Day Workweek before and showed interest in the topic, sharing multiple drivers and barriers when asked, and expressed strong opinions about the implementation measures.

When asked if this method had ever been discussed within their company, a few participants admitted that it had, but superiors had not shown great interest in applying it. As participant two said, “We have talked about it many times, it is a recurring question, there... and it is a question that normally comes with a no following it, so...”. Participant eighteen also mentioned that it was discussed “Only among colleagues, this possibility, when this started to be a project, which I think the government itself... (...) there was a time when it was talked about more, and among us colleagues, that would be it, it would be outstanding. Yes, but in our case, it is challenging.”

Workers have expressed a keen interest and a sense of curiosity regarding the implementation of this method. Consequently, it would be advantageous for companies to adopt a receptive stance towards the testing of this method to ascertain its applicability within their specific contexts.

Regarding drivers, the literature identifies several positive aspects that can result from applying the 4DWW. As cited in chapter two, better job satisfaction (Andrade et al., 2023), improved work-life balance (Barnes, 2020; Gomes & Fontinha, 2024), and improved health benefits (Bannai & Tamakoshi, 2014). The empirical findings corroborate these advantages.

Work-life balance was another advantage mentioned multiple times, particularly by those with family responsibilities. Participants referred that a Four-Day Workweek allows for better time management, helps reduce stress, and enhances personal well-being, factors mentioned in the Literature Review (Barnes, 2020; Greenhaus, 2003). Participants mentioned several times that a reduced workweek could help alleviate fatigue and stress, thereby improving both mental

and physical health, which aligns with evidence from Baptiste (2008) and Gomes and Fontinha (2024).

During interviews, productivity was the most frequently mentioned benefit. Participants associated the Four-Day Workweek with improved performance and efficiency, noting that an additional rest day could lead to enhanced focus and motivation during workdays. This aligns with the conclusions of Gomes and Fontinha (2024) from the pilot project conducted in Portugal in 2024, as well as with other pilot projects previously mentioned. On the other hand, participants expressed concern about the overtime they would work during the four days and how it could impact productivity. This finding aligns with the inconclusive results reported in the Literature Review. Fifteen participants considered productivity to be the primary advantage of practising a Four-Day Workweek, while three participants expressed reservations regarding the efficacy of such a practice in enhancing productivity. The most common disadvantage associated with the Four-Day Workweek is the overtime that could be incurred during the four days of work. Some participants admitted that this could interfere with fatigue and not help productivity levels, showing again the inconclusive results regarding this subject.

Participants also agreed that having more free time for personal activities could create a greater commitment and output during working hours, supporting Andrade et al. (2023) link between job satisfaction and performance.

Other aspects were discussed during interviews and are not included in the existing Literature Review, such as the increased availability for attending personal appointments and the potential for alternative income generation. Although these aspects are not currently topics of discussion, they may reflect the infrastructural and socio-economic conditions in Portugal, creating opportunities for future research.

Regarding barriers, the literature also mentions several barriers to the 4DWW, including difficulties in adapting to longer workdays (Campbell, 2023), incompatibility among sectors (Bird, 2010; Spencer, 2022), potential salary reductions (Araújo et al., 2024), and concerns related to communication and collaboration (Fathya et al., 2024). These were often mentioned by participants and considered limitations.

The most frequently cited disadvantage was the overtime during the four working days. Participants expressed concern about compressing their workload into four days, which could lead to fatigue, reduced productivity, and increased stress, contradicting the benefits promoted by the Four-Day Workweek. For this reason, productivity ultimately yields an inconclusive result. It is not possible to generalize that it will increase, as pretended, or decrease, because of working more hours during the four days.

Sectoral limitations in applying the Four-Day Workweek were also mentioned several times. Interviewees highlighted that workers in essential or shift-dependent sectors, such as healthcare and logistics, found it challenging to implement the Four-Day Workweek. This observation aligns with Bird's (2010) and Spencer's (2022) findings that specific industries face structural barriers that hinder the implementation of compressed workweeks.

Salary concerns were especially highlighted in the Portuguese context, where wages are generally low. While the literature assumes salary maintenance in 4DWW trials (Gomes & Fontinha, 2024), participants feared that companies might use this model to justify pay cuts. This reveals a lapse between theoretical assumptions and perceived practical implementation, highlighting the importance of economic context in employees' lives.

Cultural resistance was another topic mentioned, with participants noting that traditional organizational mindsets in Portugal could interfere with innovation and flexibility.

When discussing implementation measures, both the literature and empirical data support a gradual, structured adaptation to a Four-Day Workweek. Measures like test periods, performance tracking, internal communication, and schedule flexibility were identified as essential for successful adoption (Gomes & Fontinha, 2024; Araújo et al., 2024).

Participants emphasized the importance of planning and open communication between employers and employees to ensure alignment with management's expectations. These measures align with the literature's emphasis on trust and collaboration as components for a successful implementation.

The convergence between empirical and theoretical insights regarding implementation measures underscores the general readiness for pilot projects, ensuring that they have proper support and mechanisms tailored to each context. The findings show that implementation is not just a logistical challenge, but also a cultural and communicational one.

These findings validate many of the benefits and challenges previously identified in the literature. It is also important to note that they facilitate an understanding of issues that must be considered to ensure an effective transition.

In the following pages, a comparison is presented between the information mentioned in the Literature Review and the information gathered during the interviews.

Figure 6: Advantages and Disadvantages Found in the Literature Review and the Present Study

Drivers / Advantages	Literature Review	Present Study
Job Satisfaction	X	X
Work-life Balance	X	X
Health Benefits	X	X
Operational Cost Reduction	X	X
Increased Productivity	(X)*	X
Talent Attraction and Retention	X	X
Motivation	X	X
Additional Free Time	X	X
Reduced Stress	X	X
General Well-being Improvement	X	X
Environmental Sustainability	X	X
Creativity	X	X
Performance	X	X
Flexibility	X	X
Efficiency and Focus		X
Alternative Sources of Income		X
Barriers / Disadvantages		
Difficulty in Adapting	X	X
Sector-Specific Limitations	X	X
Non-Consensual Day Off	X	X
Team Collaboration and Communication	X	X
Longer Working Hours (Overtime)	X	X
Salary Reduction	X	X
Hiring of New Employees	X	X
Client Communication		X
Loss of Interpersonal Contact	X	X
Portuguese Work Culture		X
Productivity Decrease	(X)*	X
Financial Loss		X
Increased Fatigue	X	X
Time-Zone Differences		X
Implementation Method Challenges	X	X
Administrative Burden	X	X
Cultural Change Required	X	X

(X)*- The results on Productivity are inconclusive in the Literature Review and in the methodology, and they also vary depending on opinions.

7. Conclusion and Final Considerations

This study aimed to explore the benefits and challenges of implementing a Four-Day Workweek (4DWW) in Portugal by collecting qualitative data from eighteen professionals across multiple sectors. The study's results have been compared with existing literature reviews, providing an overview of the drivers, barriers, and implementation strategies associated with this model.

7.1. Conclusion

The collected data revealed that Portuguese professionals exhibit significant openness and enthusiasm towards adopting a compressed workweek, primarily due to its perceived positive impacts on well-being, productivity, and work-life balance. These findings support the theoretical advantages discussed in the literature, where reduced working hours are constantly associated with improved mental health and physical health (Baptiste, 2008; Bannai & Tamakoshi, 2014), greater job satisfaction (Andrade et al., 2023; Hoffman-Miller, 2024), and more work-life balance (Barnes, 2020; Gomes & Fontinha, 2024).

However, the study also acknowledged concerns regarding the 4DWW. The risk of increased working hours to compensate for the extra rest day was the main barrier identified by participants. They showed apprehension regarding the compressed work schedule, which could counteract the perceived benefits by increasing fatigue, stress, and work overload. This echoes concerns also discussed in the literature (Campbell, 2023), which emphasize that the incorrect implementation of the 4DWW could compromise its effectiveness.

The difficulty inherent in some sectors regarding the implementation of the 4DWW was another debated theme. While the 4DWW could benefit areas that require creativity or knowledge-based sectors, other sectors, such as healthcare, logistics, emergency services, and agriculture, may face operational challenges. These sector limitations could also indicate the necessity for differentiated implementation strategies, tailored to the unique needs of each industry.

Economic concerns regarding potential salary reductions and fears of increased labour costs were also mentioned, particularly in the context of Portugal's relatively low average wage. Although the literature assumes a maintenance of wages, participants highlight the importance of economic reassurance and regulatory oversight in potential implementation.

The findings also relate to how culture influences the acceptance and implementation of new work models. Some participants highlighted the rigidity and traditionalism in Portuguese work culture as factors that could hinder the adoption of innovative work practices. This underscores the need for cultural and organizational change.

This dissertation enhances the academic and practical understanding of the Four-Day Workweek, especially within the Portuguese labor context. The findings confirm that, although the 4DWW is viewed with optimism, its implementation depends on several key factors (sectoral adaptability, cultural openness, and organizational support). When addressed properly, these challenges are not barriers but essential conditions for success.

As work paradigms continue to evolve, the Four-Day Workweek emerges as a compelling model for promoting work-life balance. Its adoption may enhance employee well-being and organizational performance, while also fostering broader societal change. The path is complex, but with empirical evidence, stakeholder collaboration, and strategic planning, the 4DWW has the potential to become a viable and sustainable future of work.

In summary, although the 4DWW presents an interesting approach to achieving work satisfaction, work-life balance, and organizational efficiency, its successful implementation requires careful planning, stakeholder engagement, and tailored adaptations to each specific context. The results of this study validate much of the existing literature and extend it by providing insights into the Portuguese context and ways of working.

7.2. Final Considerations

Based on the findings, the following considerations are proposed for future researchers and organizational leaders considering the adoption or further study of the Four-Day Workweek in Portugal.

7.2.1. Practical Considerations

Firstly, it is essential to establish a regulatory framework that facilitates experimentation periods for the 4DWW. Legal rules regarding salary maintenance, overtime compensation, and work-hour flexibility are fundamental to ensuring that best practices are implemented and to fostering trust between employers and employees.

The government could offer tax benefits to companies that participate in official 4DWW pilot projects, helping those that would need to hire additional workers or restructure their work processes.

Campaigns that provide information about the Four-Day Workweek, including its potential benefits and challenges, previous case studies, best practices, and research findings, could help incentivize companies to adopt this methodology, promoting informed decision-making.

Organizations considering a transition to a Four-Day Workweek should begin with pilot programs lasting between six months and one year. These programs should have well-defined performance indicators, a feedback mechanism, and regular reviews to assess their actual impact on productivity, employee satisfaction, and financial outcomes.

Expecting all companies from different sectors to have the same approach when applying the 4DWW is unrealistic. Organizations should conduct internal assessments to identify which departments or roles can adapt to the new method without compromising outcomes, work quality, and efficiency. In sectors that require constant availability, rotating shifts may be more suitable than four-day models.

The success of implementation also depends on transparent and ongoing dialogue between leadership and employees. Employers should communicate the objectives, limitations, and expectations of a 4DWW initiative to ensure transparency and alignment. Feedback from employees should also be encouraged and incorporated into the decision-making process.

Companies should evaluate the use of automation and performance tracking software to accompany the workflow. These tools can help employees maintain productivity levels while working fewer hours.

7.2.2. Theoretical Considerations

This study provides several theoretical contributions to the existing literature on the 4DWW. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how this model is perceived in the Portuguese context, drawing on diverse perspectives from workers across various industries and backgrounds. Findings reinforce the assumptions that flexible work arrangements can lead to increased job satisfaction, motivation, and productivity (Andrade et al., 2023; Barnes, 2020). The results also suggested that these benefits depend on how the Four-Day Workweek is implemented, supporting the importance of an effective organizational implementation strategy (Araújo et al., 2024). The study also highlights the cultural and economic context and its impact on the practical implementation of the model. Concerns regarding salary reduction and sector-specific constraints underscore that models like the 4DWW cannot be universally applied without adapting to the unique realities of each country.

The findings also suggest new areas for theoretical development. The mixed feelings that participants expressed about collaboration, creativity, and communication within a compressed workweek indicate that additional theoretical models are necessary to explain the relational and cognitive demands present in each team.

7.3. Future Research

Regarding future research, it is essential to study the implications of the 4DWW in distinct sectors, particularly in those identified as less adaptable, such as healthcare, education, and manufacturing. These studies should help clarify how client expectations and legal requirements impact work-time reduction.

While short-term pilot studies offer valuable insights, longer-term studies are necessary to understand the impact on organizational performance, employee retention, and health outcomes.

Research is also needed on society's attitudes and cultural norms that influence the acceptance of alternative work models. Studies focusing on countries like Portugal may reveal challenges and opportunities shaped by historical labour dynamics and collective values.

Further research into how gender, age, socioeconomic status, and family responsibilities mediate experiences of the 4DWW could provide valuable insights for creating fairer policies. Understanding how different groups experience work-time reductions can help ensure the model is inclusive and accessible to everyone.

7.4. Limitations

Despite efforts to ensure a diverse sample in terms of age, gender, and professional background, the majority of interviewees were employed in office-based roles, albeit across various sectors. Interviews were conducted until the saturation of new information was reached; however, with more opinions from different professionals across various areas, the collected data could reveal new aspects and considerations. Consequently, the perspectives documented may not fully reflect the experiences or feasibility concerns of workers in more operational, manual, or customer-facing roles, such as those in manufacturing, retail, hospitality, or emergency services. It is recommended that subsequent research endeavours seek to encompass a more extensive array of professional settings. This will facilitate an evaluation of the replicability of the benefits and impediments ascertained in this study across diverse occupational domains. Such an evaluation will determine whether the advantages and barriers identified in this study are consistent across sectors, considering the varied work dynamics, schedules, and physical demands. Expanding the scope in this way will be essential to ensure that any future implementation of the four-day workweek is inclusive and adaptable to the full spectrum of the labour market.

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9. Appendices

Annex A- Demographic Description of Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Education Level	Sector
P1	Male	56	Bachelor's Degree	Mobility
P2	Female	23	Bachelor's Degree	Chemicals Industry
P3	Male	25	Postgraduate Degree	Chemicals Industry
P4	Male	51	Postgraduate Degree	Telecommunications
P5	Male	23	Bachelor's Degree	Consulting
P6	Female	52	Bachelor's Degree	Services
P7	Male	66	Postgraduate Degree	Accounting
P8	Female	46	Bachelor's Degree	State Administration
P9	Male	61	High School	Banking
P10	Male	31	Master's Degree	Technology
P11	Female	30	Master's Degree	Marketing
P12	Female	22	Bachelor's Degree	Banking
P13	Female	24	Bachelor's Degree	Healthcare
P14	Female	22	Bachelor's Degree	Accounting
P15	Male	22	Bachelor's Degree	Logistics
P16	Female	33	Master's Degree	Marketing
P17	Male	24	Bachelor's Degree	Banking
P18	Female	32	Bachelor's Degree	Communication

Annex B- Cited Advantages, Disadvantages, and Implementation Measures by each participant

Participant	Advantages	Disadvantages	Implementation Measures
P1	Improved performance and productivity	Communication difficulties, need to hire new employees, and bureaucracy	Organizational change
P2	Productivity, flexibility, free time, and motivation	Overtime, salary reduction, time zones, specific sectors, communication with suppliers, and costs	Remote work, planning, and communication with suppliers
P3	Work-life balance	Overtime, salary reduction, time zones	Trial period, organizational change
P4	Productivity, free time, and well-being	Overtime, specific sectors, organizational adaptation	Remote work, organizational change
P5	Productivity, free time, motivation, rest	Overtime	Planning
P6	Work-life balance, well-being, reduced stress, and greater satisfaction	Overtime, salary reduction, loss of interpersonal contact	Planning, results monitoring
P7	Work-life balance, reduced stress, and sustainability	Overtime, salary reduction, specific sectors, loss of productivity, need for new hires	Automation of processes and flexibility

P8	Flexibility, sustainability	Overtime, specific sectors, family routines	Remote work, planning, organizational change, results monitoring
P9	Free time (family), performance	Overtime, salary reduction	Results monitoring
P10	Productivity	Overtime, communication, trust	Results monitoring, organizational change, remote work
P11	Efficiency, well-being, work-life balance, creativity	Overtime, communication, specific sectors, family routines, loss of money	Planning, organizational change
P12	Free time, motivation, well-being, alternative income	Overtime, salary reduction, time zones, communication	Planning, remote work, results monitoring, trial period
P13	Free time (family)	Overtime, need for new hires, Portuguese culture	Organizational change, trial period
P14	Focus, commute time, availability for services	Overtime	Planning, organizational change
P15	Well-being, reduced stress	Overtime, specific sectors, need for new hires	Planning, remote work, monitoring, organizational change
P16	Free time (family), well-being, reduced stress, satisfaction	Overtime, specific sectors, communication, Portuguese culture	Planning, remote work
P17	More rest, work-life balance	Overtime, loss of productivity, loss of money	Monitoring, organizational change
P18	Productivity, free time, and motivation	Overtime, communication, Portuguese culture	Remote work, monitoring, and communication with clients

Annex C- Category Dictionary

Main Objective	Specific Objectives	Category	Sub-category	Code	Definition
Could a four-day workweek be successfully implemented in Portugal?	What are the main drivers associated with the Four-day workweek?	Drivers	Individual	IND	Increased autonomy over personal time due to reduced workdays
			Organizational	ORG	Potential for enhanced output and work efficiency
			Strategic	STR	Use of innovative work models to attract/retain top talent
			Socioemotional	SOE	Improved balance between professional and personal responsibilities
	What are the main barriers associated with the Four-day workweek?	Barriers	Operational	OPE	Need to condense workload into fewer days may increase pressure
			Cultural	CLT	Resistance from teams or leadership based on traditional views
			Economic	ECO	Concerns about potential salary cuts or legal constraints
			Relational	REL	Potential Loss of informal collaboration and team cohesion
			Planning & Monitoring	PLM	Systematic tracking of performance and impact after implementation

	To achieve a successful implementation, what changes should be considered?	Alterations	Technological & Structural	TES	Use of automation to maintain efficiency with reduced hours
			Cultural & Human	CUH	Building mutual trust between employer and employees
			Flexibility & Adaptation	FLE	Allowing role or schedule adjustments to accommodate the 4DWW

Annex D- Interview Script

Interview script “The four-day working week: Implementation in Portugal”

1. What are the main advantages you see in the four-day working week?
2. What are the main disadvantages of the four-day working week?
3. Would it be possible to implement the four-day week in your work context?
4. What changes do you think would be necessary for the best possible implementation?

Annex E- Advantages codes in MAXQDA

Códigos

- > Demográficos 142
- > Vantagens 0
 - Produtividade 18
 - Atração de novos talentos 15
 - Tempo-livre 12
 - Descanso 7
 - Motivação 7
 - Melhoria do Bem-estar 6
 - Melhoria comunicação 5
 - Work-Life Balance 5
 - Família 4
 - Menos stress 4
 - Disponibilidade para certos serviços 3
 - Mais satisfação 3
 - Sustentável 4
 - Flexibilidade 2
 - Melhor desempenho 2
 - Menos custos operacionais (eletricidade, água...) 2
 - Trabalhos creativos/esforço mental 2
 - Gestão de tempo/prioridades 1
 - Maior eficiência 1
 - Maior foco 1
 - Novos rendimentos 1
 - Poupança dinheiro (deslocações, roupa, alimentação) 1
 - Tempo de deslocação para o emprego 1

Annex F-Sector Code Extracts from Interviews

Então, dependendo um bocadinho da empresa e do setor, acho que há trabalhos como o meu que ter uma semana mais produzida de trabalho iria gerar maior stress.	● aumento do stress
Neste caso seria então o aumento da carga horária e fadiga para manter a produtividade. Também pode não se adequar a todos os tipos de trabalhos. Por exemplo, os de saúde, serviços de emergência, podem encontrar dificuldades na implementação deste modelo.	● Sobrecarga horária nos 4 dias ● Cansaço
Estou a perceber, estou a perceber. Eu acho que é só, pronto, é coisa dos setores, por exemplo. O setor público, os hospitais, e para isso também já deixo de saber, não é?	
Há setores em que uma semana de 4 dias não é tão fácil de implementação, ou seja, talvez não seja tão bom, por exemplo, cuidadores, pessoas que dependem de outras para cuidar delas. Certo, certo. Ou ter uma pessoa, menos um dia, possivelmente a ser substituída, vamos imaginar, por outra pessoa, nesse dia, envolve um contato humano diferente, porque calhar a pessoa que está a ser cuidada não precisa disso, não é? Essas pessoas que estão a ser cuidadas estão mais debilitadas.	
E também e também nem todos os trabalhos também se adequam a esse regime, não é, há trabalhos, há tarefas que não, que não, que não, que não adequam a essa disponibilidade de horário.	
Isto quanto às vantagens, do ponto de vista dos colaboradores ahmm, e de algumas empresas que já, já vamos ver que que a minha opinião não é não é, não é assim 100% a favor da semana dos 4 dias. Depois, quanto às desvantagens, um, na minha modesta opinião, a semana dos 4 dias não, não se consegue aplicar a todo tipo de profissões. Porque, se uma organização tem um certo fluxo de trabalho e esse fluxo de trabalho tem que ser cumprido...hm...passando de 5 para 4 dias das duas uma, ou os trabalhadores são obrigados a trabalhar mais horas...ou.., o, como é que eu hei de explicar...vai-lhes aumentar o stress, portanto, já vai contrariar, a contrariar um bocadinho da da da da daquela situação de, de ser uma vantagem...porque se for umas determinadas tarefas elas, uma, uma tarefa que demora 8 horas a fazer, ela não consegue ser feita em 6, portanto o tempo, será o mesmo. Eu vejo, por exemplo, que em empresas de, com um fluxo muito grande de trabalho intelectual...ah, os benefícios poderão ser interessantes. Porque as pessoas estão mais...e...que não tenham a que não tenham aquela tarefa que	● Produtividade ● aumento do stress ● Contratação de mais colaboradores ● Perda de eficiência