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Business Development & Entrepreneurship

Title:

The Impact of Flexible Working Arrangements on Employer Attractiveness:
A Comparative Study Between Startups and Large Companies

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Abstract

Several studies on Employer Attractiveness (EA) have identified factors that influence job seekers' decisions in the labor market, such as economic benefits, a fun work environment, and career advancement opportunities. However, the impact of Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) on EA has not been thoroughly explored, especially, regarding the impact on firm size level, between startups and large companies, which differ significantly in terms of attractiveness. Using a 2x2 vignette experiment with a sample of young students or recent graduates job seekers, this thesis investigates the impact of FWAs on EA, focusing on large companies versus startups. The results indicate that FWAs significantly enhance attractiveness metrics, highlighting the growing importance of workplace flexibility in employment decisions. Contrary to expectations, no significant difference was found between large companies and startups on EA, regardless of whether they offer FWAs, indicating that EA levels and the impact of FWAs are similar for both. The partial correlation analysis reveals that FWAs are significantly positively associated with Interest Value and negatively with the Social Value, while the impact on Economic, Development and Application Values is marginal. The study suggests that integrating FWAs into EA practices can enhance talent attraction regardless of the firm size. This research provides valuable guidance for practitioners in HR and contributes to a large body of literature within the fields of recruitment, employer attractiveness, and HRM. Limitations are discussed and future research is suggested.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Motivation & Societal Relevance

The exploration of employer branding is a well-established area of research. Employer branding is a strategy that has the potential to assist companies by setting them apart from their competitors, attracting, and retaining both potential and current employees successfully (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Extensive research on employer branding, particularly on the factors contributing to employer attractiveness, has yielded valuable frameworks for companies seeking to strengthen their brand (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Berthon et al., 2005; Saraswathy et al., 2010; Pingle & Sodhi, 2011). Nevertheless, it has been argued before that these factors differ from those that job seekers look for when they consider their future employer to be a startup (Tumasjan et al., 2011; Roach & Sauermann, 2015; Sauermann, 2017), as startups are in a disadvantaged position and cannot rely on their reputation to attract them (Aldrich 1999). Currently, an increasing number of companies are working to enhance their brand and gain an advantage in the competitive labor market, commonly referred to as the "war for talent" (Pingle & Sodhi, 2011). On the other hand, nowadays, job seekers have access to abundant information about the activities of employees in different companies and even countries, leading them to seek the right employer that aligns with their needs, culture, and mindset.

Organizations seeking to maximize talent attraction frequently utilize Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) to gain a competitive edge (Barney, 1991). In contrast to traditional work settings, flexible or alternative working arrangements can be defined as the extent to which an employer provides employees with opportunities to work outside the usual boundaries of a typical organizational work structure; this flexibility encompasses variations in the quantity of work, the scheduling of work hours, and the workplace location (Kattenbach, Demerouti, & Nachreiner, 2010; Shockley & Allen, 2007). FWAs are an attractive aspect for organizations to prospective and current employees (Thompson et al., 2014) and lead to positive outcomes for both (Baltes et al., 1999; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Kossek & Michel, 2011; Casper & Buffardi, 2004). Indeed, access to FWAs is associated with increases in satisfaction with working-time fit and overall job satisfaction (Possenriede & Plantenga, 2011; Maxwell et al., 2007). Consequently, FWAs can serve as a mechanism to fulfill organizational recruitment objectives (Kossek & Friede, 2006), as well as to increase employer attractiveness.

However, despite the proven benefits, since last February, numerous companies, including Apple, Amazon, IBM, Google, Meta, and others, have begun pursuing RTO (Return-To-Office) mandates¹ (Forbes 2023; Business Insider 2023). Employees reacted to this development, with some even coordinating efforts to submit a petition opposing the change (Business Insider, 2023). Porter and Ayman (2010) have demonstrated that the inflexibility of work schedules significantly predicts the likelihood of employees leaving large organizations, and RTO mandates may drive employees to startups and small businesses (Bhaimiya, 2024). Unlike large corporations, startups are known for their flexible schedules and remote work options (Nestor, 2023), offering a higher degree of flexibility in the workplace. Reportedly, startups and scale-ups were among the most flexible companies to work for, in 2023 (Flexa., 2023). This fact could harm large companies' attractiveness as well as their ability to access wider talent pools.

1.2. Introduction to the Problem Statement

As outlined above, employer attractiveness factors have served as a tool for organizations aiming to attract talents and enhance their brand. Some of the factors for large enterprises consist of opportunities to work globally with international colleagues, job stability and security, career advancement opportunities, economic benefits, and a fun work environment (Pingle & Sodhi, 2011; Berthon et al., 2005). However, as new businesses face challenges in attracting employees (Williamson, 2000), these factors differ in startups and small enterprises (Tumasjan et al., 2011; Roach & Sauermann, 2015; Sauermann, 2017). Research focused on attractive attributes in startups found a better team climate, wide learning opportunities, and flexibility as highly valued elements for potential employees (Tumasjan et al., 2011). This emphasis on flexibility is a unique aspect for startups and it may present a critical challenge for larger companies. It possibly suggests a need for them to shape their strategies in order to remain competitive in the labor market as organizations offering FWAs can develop a strong reputation, allowing them to effectively compete for high-quality talent (Abid and Barech 2017; Beauregard and Henry 2009).

¹ We use the term "RTO mandates" to describe the policies of companies that necessitate employees to work onsite for a minimum number of days per week.

1.3. Problem Statement & Research Questions

While existing research has offered insightful frameworks on factors affecting EA, there is a need to update them and include new trends and preferences, such as FWAs. Moreover, given that startups frequently offer FWAs and such flexibility has been identified as an attractive attribute for them (Tumasjan et al., 2011), we want to explore whether large companies can compete with them on this front, hence, whether the impact of FWAs on EA varies based on firm size.

Therefore, this research aims to address this gap by investigating whether FWAs are indeed an attractive attribute for potential employees and whether they can be incorporated into the existing EA framework as a new determinant. Additionally, by evaluating and comparing the appeal of FWAs for job seekers at firm size level, in both startups and large companies. Thus, the questions we aim to answer are:

- 1. Are Flexible Working Arrangements an attractive attribute for organizations? Can they be integrated into the Employer Attractiveness framework?*
- 2. Is there a differential impact of Flexible Working Arrangements on Employer Attractiveness based on Firm Size?*

2. LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Employer Branding (EB)

One of the first people that used the term Employer Branding (EB) was Ambler & Barrow (1996), who defined it as “the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company” (p.187); this definition emphasizes the significance of the employer-employee relationship and the mutual benefits derived from it. Biswas & Suar, (2014) defined EB as a vital tool for enhancing the organizational image in the labor market, attracting talent, and subsequently positively affecting the performance of companies. In his study he argued that the three key elements of EB are (a) employer brand equity, (b) brand loyalty and employee engagement, and (c) the attraction and retention of talent. In this thesis, we will engage with the third element which is the attraction of young people who seek employment. More and more companies use EB as a tool to draw in new hires and ensure that their current employees are actively involved in the firm's culture and strategy (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). Organizations need to build a strong employer brand as they may be able to decrease employee acquisition costs, enhance employee relations, boost employee retention, and even offer lower salaries for similar positions compared to firms with less established employer brands (Ritson 2002; Berthon et al., 2005).

2.2. Employer Attractiveness (EA)

Another similar concept to Employer Branding (EB) is Employer Attractiveness (EA). More specifically, the attractiveness of a company is influenced significantly by its image and reputation and plays a significant role in shaping the decisions of job seekers to join and existing employees to remain with the company (Schaarschmidt et al., 2021). Additionally, perceptions of a positive image result in a greater number and quality of prospective employees for organizations (Turban and Cable, 2003); Therefore, each concept is connected to the other and contrariwise. Berthon et al., (2005) have defined employer attractiveness as “the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization” (p.155). It can be classified as internal and external EA. Internal EA is the degree of attractiveness among the company's current employees while external is the perspective of potential employees (Pingle & Sodhi 2011).

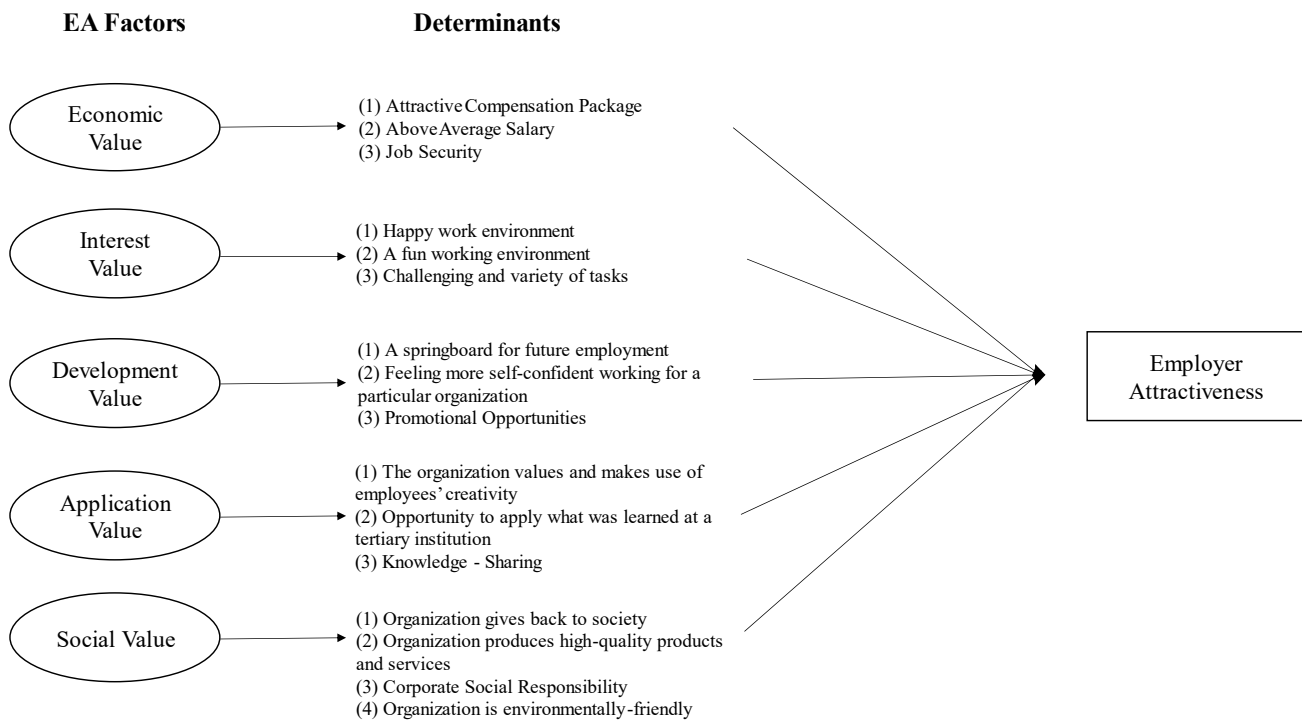
Studies that aim to assess the attractiveness of organizations usually use the terms “General Attractiveness” and “Job Pursuit Intentions”. Highhouse et al., (2003) described Attractiveness as the individuals' overall positive perceptions and attitudes towards a particular organization as a potential place for employment. It reflects the extent to which individuals find the organization appealing, desirable, and suitable for their career goals and aspirations. On the other hand, Job Pursuit Intentions is a term in organizational psychology and HR management that describes how likely someone is to accept a job offer from a specific employer. This is important for both job seekers and employers because it shows how much interest and commitment a person has for a particular job or company (Saks et al., 1995). However, apart from these terms, factors that assess attractiveness have influenced the concept of EA over the years.

2.3. Determinants of EA

Multiple studies have investigated the factors that influence EA (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Berthon et al., 2005; Saraswathy et al., 2010); while Pingle & Sodhi, (2011) built upon them by creating an eleven-factor structure. Ambler & Barrow (1996) initially identified three key factors of EA: psychological, functional, and economic benefits. Later, Berthon et al. (2005) expanded on this by categorizing EA into five values. They incorporated interest and social value under psychological benefits, development and application value under functional benefits, and economic value under economic benefits. This framework has been widely regarded as one of the most accurate for many years and continues to be used by scholars to evaluate and study EA. Building on these, Pingle & Sodhi (2011) further refined and extended the EA framework. Their eleven-factor structure enhances the original dimensions proposed by Ambler and Barrow and integrates elements from the five factors identified by Berthon et al. (2005) and the seven factors proposed by Saraswathy & Thamaraiselvan (2010). Specifically, factors such as Relationship, Recognition, Interest/Fun Value, Existing Personal Contacts, and Altruistic Value capture the Psychological benefits. Factors including Application Value, Learning and Development Value, Global Opportunities, and Location Advantage represent the Functional dimension.

[Figure 1](#), illustrates an overview of the EA framework, based on Berthon et al.'s (2005) paper, combined with some additional determinants by Pingle & Sodhi (2011). Following, we will delve deeper into their meaning.

Figure 1: Determinants of EA



2.3.1. Economic Value

Economic value is the extent to which an employer is appealing based on factors like above-average salaries, comprehensive benefits, and job security & stability (Berthon et al., 2005).

Salary is a crucial job factor (Jurgensen, 1978) and significantly influences job appeal. According to Rynes (1987), “compensation systems are capable of attracting the right people because they communicate so much about an organization's philosophy, values, and practices” (p. 190). It is widely known that people generally prefer higher pay, and generous compensation tends to attract a larger pool of high-quality candidates (Cable & Judge, 1994). Companies that offer fair pay, flexible benefits, pay based on performance, and clear pay policies are seen as more attractive places to work (Cable & Judge, 1994). Consequently, the attractiveness of job previews and job choices is influenced by compensation, with roles offering higher pay being more appealing than those with average compensation (Saks et al., 1996).

Additionally, job security is about how people feel about their job stability, affecting worries they might have about losing their job or not getting opportunities like promotions,

good working conditions, or chances for long-term career growth (Dhuryana & Hussain, 2018). Job security increases employer attractiveness but also fosters higher employee retention and engagement levels (Firdaus et al., 2023).

2.3.2. Interest Value

Interest Value is the degree to which an individual is attracted to an employer renowned for offering a fun work environment, that employees are excited to work for. (Berthon et al., 2005). Schlager et al., (2011) expanded this by including items like "challenging tasks" and "a variety of tasks." Importantly, both challenging and engaging tasks are among the leading predictors of job satisfaction (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004), and consequently, employer attractiveness.

Moreover, workplace fun typically includes “any social, interpersonal, or task-related activities at work that are of a playful or humorous nature and offer individuals amusement, enjoyment, or pleasure” (Fluegge, 2008, p.5). Previous research highlighted that fun workplaces may recruit more qualified candidates (Karl & Peluchette, 2006). Fun is predominantly linked to favorable outcomes for organizations, including the attraction of applicants (Tews et al., 2012), job satisfaction, employee relations (Karl and Peluchette, 2006), work engagement, task performance, and organizational citizenship behavior (Fluegge, 2008). Employees in a fun organization may have longer tenures, decreasing turnover rates (Plester et al., 2015).

2.3.3. Development Value

Development Value is the extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that offers recognition, a sense of worth and confidence, as well as career advancement opportunities, such as promotions and a pathway to future employment prospects (Berthon et al., 2005).

Promotion opportunities typically entail transitioning to a new role and level within the company. This can consist of acquiring a new job title, getting broader responsibilities, securing an increased salary and associated perks, gaining decision-making authority, and taking on leadership roles and duties. The potential for career advancement and promotional opportunities can be pivotal in both attracting and retaining talent (Eger, 2019). Career progression is particularly significant for existing employees (Santiago, 2019). Recognition

refers to the acknowledgment employees receive from management, encompassing all aspects related to feeling valued in the workplace. It emerged as a distinct factor in the study by Pingle & Sodhi (2011) and is closely connected to employer attractiveness.

2.3.4. Application Value

Application value is the degree to which an individual is attracted to an employer who gives the chance to employees to apply learned skills, as well as to teach others and share their knowledge (Berthon et al., 2005).

Research suggests that when employees effectively apply their skills, it boosts their job satisfaction and overall well-being. Not fully utilizing their skills can increase the likelihood of experiencing depression (Morrison et al., 2005), affecting their well-being and by extension the attractiveness to an employer. Furthermore, the ability to share knowledge with peers enhances the employer's value. Employers strengthen their appeal by fostering a culture that prioritizes and facilitates knowledge sharing, which in turn promotes collaboration, engagement, and productivity (Ahmad & Karim, 2019). Despite its significance as a factor in EA, prospective employees often rate Application Value lower than other values (Mostafa, 2022).

2.3.5. Social Value

Social value which includes Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and a positive atmosphere with colleagues, is the extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer known for producing high-quality products and services, giving back to society, being environmentally friendly, customer-oriented, and stakeholder-focused, and undertaking quality CSR initiatives. This factor measures the importance of both the organization's societal contributions and the quality of interpersonal relationships at the workplace in influencing an individual's attraction to the employer (Pingle & Sodhi, 2011; Berthon et al., 2005).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can be defined as a range of corporate actions that extend the firm's economic goals and have a positive impact on organizational stakeholders (Turker, 2009). Companies that exhibit strong CSR are often seen as more appealing employers, potentially giving them an advantage in attracting candidates (Turban & Greening, 1997). A high level of CSR enhances employer attractiveness particularly for job seekers with many choices but does not have the same effect on those with limited

options. This suggests that companies with strong CSR have an advantage in attracting talents (Albinger & Freeman, 2000). Additionally, fostering a positive workplace atmosphere and building strong relationships with colleagues are crucial factors in employer attractiveness (Bakanauskiene et al., 2017).

2.4. Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs)

An expanding collection of research highlights the influence of non-monetary incentives in driving employee motivation and the positive effect on work outcomes (Sauermann & Cohen, 2010); such motives include the provisioning of remote work and FWAs (Thompson et al., 2014). To define it, Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) are “a mutually beneficial arrangement between employees and employers in which both parties agree on *when*, *where* and *how* the employee will work to meet the firm’s needs” (Kossek et al., 2014, p. 2). Many forms of FWAs exist, such as telework, flextime & flexplace schedules, compressed work weeks, and flexible shift work (Baltes et al., 1999).

Flextime

Flextime is a flexible work arrangement where employees have the autonomy to choose their arrival and departure times at work. Typically, organizations implementing flextime mandate a set of core hours, during which all employees must be present. For example, an organization may require employees to be available from 10 am to 3 pm, allowing them to adjust their start and stop times around these core hours (Baltes et al., 1999; Kossek et al., 2014). The concept of flextime often revolves around providing a balance between organizational needs and individual employee preferences, enhancing the work-life balance.

Research indicates that flextime significantly enhances employer attractiveness. The ability of employees to control their work hours is seen as a crucial aspect of desirable employment (Schmoll, 2019; Thompson, 2014). The attractiveness of flextime is especially pronounced when there is no requirement for core hours, providing a more supportive and flexible working environment (Thompson, 2014). Studies have found that flextime arrangements correlate strongly with increased organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Scandura & Lankau, 1997). Additionally, Krausz and Freibach (1983) observed that flextime has a notable negative impact on absenteeism. From the perspective of job seekers, the availability of flextime makes a position more appealing compared to positions without such flexibility (Rau & Hyland, 2002). These findings underscore the value of

flextime in making an organization an attractive place to work, contributing to both employee well-being and organizational success.

Flexplace & Telework

Flexplace encompasses a range from having no choice to having complete flexibility to work away from the main office location (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). It refers to the number of days per week or month that employees are allowed to work from an alternate location (Thompson et al., 2014). This concept is often closely associated with telework or telecommuting (Shockley & Allen, 2007). Telework involves employees performing tasks outside the central workplace, for at least part of their work schedule. It encompasses “all work-related substitutions of telecommunications and related information technologies for travel” (Collins 2005, p. 115). Essentially, telework represents a significant shift from traditional workplace norms, providing flexibility in terms of where work is conducted.

The inclusion of flexplace in job advertisements can significantly enhance the perception of job flexibility, leading to greater interest in job pursuit and higher acceptance intentions (Stich, 2020). Since telework is often a component of flexplace arrangements (Shockley & Allen, 2007), similar positive effects can be attributed to it. Offering telework can decrease the likelihood of employees leaving the company (Teo, Lim, and Wai, 1998). Furthermore, Khalifa and Etezadi (1997) found that both managers and employees believe that telecommuting positively affects employee retention. They also noted that telework is expected to improve a company’s ability to attract new recruits. These findings indicate that flexplace, and by extension, telework, are not only practical workplace strategies but also key factors in enhancing EA to current and prospective employees.

To conclude, flexibility has evolved beyond being merely considered a perk (Galinsky et al., 2008); it has transformed into a competitive tool that organizations can leverage to achieve their strategic recruitment goals. He et al. (2020) provided evidence that job flexibility is a highly valued job amenity, indicating that applicants are more inclined to apply for positions offering it. Thus, we anticipate and hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1: The presence of Flexible Working Arrangements in an organization leads to increased Employer Attractiveness.

2.5. Startups vs. Large Companies

In this chapter, we will discuss the differences between startups and large companies in terms of attractiveness, concerning aspects like career advancement opportunities, job security, compensation benefits, as well as the impact of FWAs.

Main Differences

Employment conditions in startups and large corporations differ in several significant ways, influencing their attractiveness to potential and current employees. Large corporations typically operate within highly bureaucratic frameworks, often limiting an individual's ability to engage or influence the strategic direction of the company. In contrast, startups and small businesses usually have less formal structures, allowing employees to play a more active role in shaping the company's future and participating in decision-making processes (Ahmadi and Helms 1997; Williamson 2000). Large firms are often structured hierarchically, with employees having specialized job roles and narrow tasks (Tumasjan et al., 2011), while startups usually feature flatter hierarchies where employees handle a wider range of responsibilities without clear job role boundaries (Cardon and Stevens, 2004). Furthermore, while startups provide opportunities for employees to develop a diverse set of skills and engage with various aspects of the business (Sorenson and Audia, 2000), larger companies typically offer more structured career advancement pathways and established training programs crucial for long-term career growth (Holtmann & Idson, 1991); as highlighted by Tumasjan et al. (2011), startups may struggle to compete with large companies in this front.

In terms of job security, and compensation startups face significant challenges (Tumasjan et al., 2011). They are characterized by higher levels of risk, uncertainty, and limited recognition they face (Moser et al., 2017). Employees in startups face the uncertainty of their employer's success (Aldrich and Auster, 1986; Navis and Glynn, 2011) as the risk of failure, reaches a remarkable rate of 90% (Statista, 2023). This contributes to reduced job security among the workforce (Schnabel et al., 2011) and usually harms startups' attractiveness. Lastly, startups, face limitations in terms of size and resources, making it difficult for them to provide the same level of compensation and benefits as established companies (Cardon and Stevens 2004). They typically offer lower salaries than established large firms (Troske, 1998), however, they try to balance this through alternative forms of

compensation such as stock-based options, to make their offers attractive to potential employees (Williamson 2000).

Differences regarding The Impact of Flexible Working Arrangements

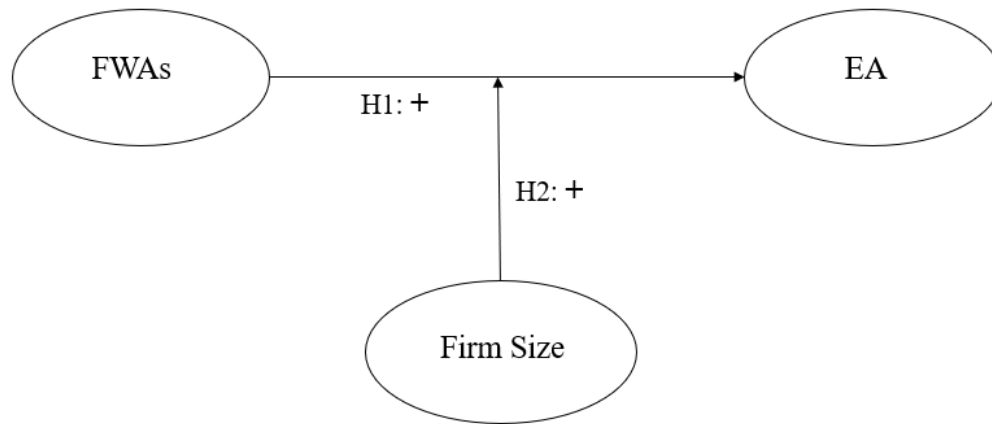
Despite the challenges that often place startups in a vulnerable position in terms of attractiveness, startups, usually win the race for flexibility. They are renowned for creating a more relaxed and flexible work environment (Tumasjan et al., 2011) compared to large companies. Potential employees may inherently be inclined to believe that their work environment will be more relaxed and adaptable in startups compared to larger firms. This may drive employees to startups and small organizations in search of the flexible working schedules they desire (Porter and Ayman, 2010) and potentially affect large companies' attractiveness and their ability to access wider talent pools. On the other hand, even though in recent days the flexibility is more connected to startups, large organizations have more resources and systems to meet employee FWA requests, unlike small firms (Kotey, 2017). The cost of providing FWAs would be higher for small firms than for large firms due to fewer employees and resources (Kotey & Koomson, 2019), making it even easier for large firms to compete with startups in terms of flexibility, regardless of whether they ultimately decide and succeed in doing so.

As we have discussed the main differences in various aspects of attractiveness, it is evident that large companies often rank higher in overall attractiveness but lower in flexibility. However, they are more capable of offering FWAs due to their greater resources compared to startups and smaller firms. This leads us to hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2: The Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) will have a stronger positive impact on Employer Attractiveness in large companies compared to startups.

The current thesis' conceptual model, built upon the hypotheses described, is depicted below in [Figure 2](#).

Figure 2: Conceptual model & Hypotheses



3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. Empirical Context

Our approach involved a 2x2 vignette experiment encompassing four company descriptions, with a between-subjects design. This experiment incorporated two levels of firm size: (1) large companies versus (2) startups; and two levels of FWAs: (1) high versus (2) low, including either no opportunity for flexible working schedules or the option to have flexible working schedules. This classification for FWAs was chosen to differentiate between companies that use traditional working arrangements and those that implement FWAs. The criteria reflect current industry practices. (see [Appendix 1](#) for the detailed vignettes).

3.2. Sampling & Data Collection

The questionnaire was created through the Qualtrics Platform. Our selected sample consisted of young job seekers, specifically recent bachelor's and master's degree students and graduates. To facilitate participant recruitment for the experiment, a comprehensive strategy was implemented, with a primary focus on engaging the Utecht University community directly. As a student within the university, personal outreach and networking were leveraged to connect with individuals who fall within the study's target demographic. Online platforms, and social media groups, provided an effective channel for disseminating information about the study. Additionally, a snowball sampling approach helped us widen our audience.

3.3. Variables & Questions

Two constructs were used to assess our dependent variable which is Employer Attractiveness. These constructs are "General Employer Attractiveness" and "Job Acceptance Intentions". To ensure content validity, multi-item measurements were included based on the past relevant literature. Particularly, we used four items to operationalize perceived general employer attractiveness by Highhouse et al. (2003). A sample item is "This company is attractive to me as a place for employment". A combination of Cable and Judge (1996) and Saks et al. (1995) provided us with two items for the construct of job acceptance intentions; a sample item includes "If I had an offer at this company, I would accept it". In addition to these, participants were asked to assess the perceived values that

were described in section 2.2. (Economic value, Interest value, Development value, Application value, Social value) as additional variables that were used to explore to which dimension of EA the FWAs are most related. All corresponding questions be found in the Appendix of this thesis.

Before participants started responding to the questionnaire, a manipulation check was carried out to verify their complete understanding of the scenarios presented. This check included two questions: one focusing on the presence of FWAs or not, as outlined in company descriptions, and the other concerning the firm size described in the company description, large firm or startup. Lastly, as Judge and Bretz (1992) utilized several factors as control variables in their analysis of employer attractiveness, we included age, gender, and education level. The questions had the form of a 5-point Likert scale. (see [Appendix 2](#) for the full questionnaire and multi-item measurements).

3.4. Analytical Techniques

We analyzed the results in SPSS. Firstly, we excluded from our data the responders who were not within our desired sample audience. Then, we used Descriptive Statistics to summarize the main features of the data, such as identifying basic trends and frequencies of the demographics. Next, we used Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to examine any significant differences between the means of different group variables, like perceptions between participants considering startups versus large enterprises, or varying levels of FWAs. Finally, we computed partial correlation coefficients to isolate the unique contribution of FWAs to each EA dimension, while controlling for other EA dimensions. This method helped us understand the specific impact of FWAs independent of other factors.

4. RESULTS

4.1. General Descriptive Analysis

154 students and recent graduates who are seeking a job, or expect to enter the labor market in the coming years, participated in the experiment (N=154). Scenarios' distribution was as follows: (Group 1) Large Company with FWAs (N=43); (Group 2) Large Company without FWAs (N=36); (Group 3) Startup with FWAs (N=38); (Group 4) Startup without FWAs (N=37).

The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 36 years old, with Mean = 23.9. More than half of the respondents, 66.9%, identified themselves as female (N = 106), while 33.1% identified themselves as male (N = 47), and 0.6% as a third gender (N = 1). Moreover, the participants were categorized by the field of study. 20.1% were students/graduates of the Humanities field (N = 31), 58.4% of Social Sciences (N = 90), 5.2% Natural Sciences (N = 8), while 16.2% (N = 25) answered "Other" with most of them being in the Business sector as well as in engineering, education, and arts.

In [Table 1](#) more details about the demographics can be found as well as chi-square tests. These were conducted to check whether there are significant differences between the four groups based on their demographics; lack of significance indicates that the randomization has been successful. The P-values for the field of study (.105) and age (.866) are higher than .05, implying that there is no significant difference between the groups based on these demographic distributions. However, the P-value for gender (.014) is lower than .05, indicating a significant difference in gender distribution among the groups. Hence, the randomization of participants between the four vignettes generally succeeded, particularly in terms of age and field of study.

Table 1: Demographics & Chi-square tests for difference between the four experimental groups (N=154)

Demographic	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	P-Value
Gender					
Man	15	18	6	8	
Woman	28	17	32	29	
Other/Prefer not to say	0	1	0	0	.014
Field of Study					
Humanities	3	11	10	7	
Social Sciences	24	25	20	21	
Natural Sciences	6	1	1	1	
Other (Business, Engineering, etc.)	10	9	7	8	.105
Age					
Mean Age	23.98	23.94	24.1	23.59	.866
Total	43	36	38	37	

[Table 2](#) describes all the variables that we computed from our survey data, to test our hypotheses. The two independent dichotomous variables are dummies for FWAs (1=yes, 0=no) and Firm Size (1=Large Company, 0=Startup). The dependent variables that are used to measure the company's attractiveness are deemed continuous, scaled from 1 to 5: General Employer Attractiveness and Job Acceptance Intentions. Moreover, we added measures for the 5 values of EA: Economic Value, Interest Value, Development Value, Application Value, and Social Value, to explore their association with the presence of FWAs.

Table 2 also shows the Internal Consistency Reliability of the Multi-item Measurements which was measured using Cronbach's alpha (α). The dependent variables, General Employer Attractiveness ($\alpha = .929$) and Job Acceptance Intentions ($\alpha = .915$) as well as the Interest Value ($\alpha = .707$), show high internal consistency reliability with $\alpha > 0.7$. Economic Value ($\alpha = .682$), and Application Value ($\alpha = .615$) displayed moderate reliability

while Development Value ($\alpha = .373$) and Social Value ($\alpha = .389$) recorded low reliability, indicating potential issues with internal consistency. Overall, the findings confirm good reliability for the dependent variables that are used to test the hypotheses. Reliabilities of the five EA values are less convincing, but given that our only purpose is to tentatively explore their correlation with FWAs, this is not a major concern.

Table 2: Variables & Descriptive Statistics (N=154)

Variable	Description	Statistics
Independent Variables		
FWAs	Flexibility in work arrangements (1 = FWAs, 0 = non- FWAs)	1= 52.6%; 0=47.4%
Firm Size	Firm Size (1 = Large company, 0 = Startup)	1=51.3%; 0=48.7%
Dependent Variables		
General Employer Attractiveness	Mean score of 3 items* measuring perceived attractiveness of the company ($\alpha=.929$)	M=3.37, SD=1.01
Job Acceptance Intentions	Mean score of 2 items* measuring job acceptance intentions ($\alpha=.915$)	M=3.39, SD=0.98
Additional Variables		
Economic Value	Mean score of 2 items* measuring the economic value ($\alpha=.682$)	M=3.43, SD=0.75
Interest Value	Mean score of 2 items* measuring the interest value ($\alpha=.707$)	M=3.54, SD=0.82
Development Value	Mean score of 2 items* measuring the development value ($\alpha=.373$)	M=3.77, SD=0.59
Application Value	Mean score of 2 items* measuring the application value ($\alpha=.615$)	M=3.37, SD=0.88
Social Value	Mean score of 2 items* measuring the social value ($\alpha=.389$)	M=3.78, SD=0.64
Manipulation Check Variables		
Perceived Flexibility	Score of 1 item* measuring perceived flexibility	M=2.93, SD=1.7
Perceived Firm Size	Score of 1 item* measuring perceived Firm Size	M=3.27, SD=1.5

All the variables are rated on 5-point scales (strongly disagree/disagree/neither agree nor disagree/agree/strongly agree), coded 1 to 5.

M, mean; SD, standard deviation; α , Cronbach's Alphas.

**All the items can be found in the [Appendix](#).*

Next, we performed two t-tests to understand whether our manipulation checks on FWAs and company size worked out as expected. For this purpose, we analyzed the questions for perceived flexibility and perceived firm size. These tests assessed if

participants' perceptions aligned significantly with the intended conditions of each scenario. For the Perceived Flexibility question, the participants were asked to rate from 1 to 5, where 1 indicated low FWAs and 5 indicated high FWAs. For the two groups (1,3) that had received the vignettes with high FWAs, the mean score on the Perceived Flexibility question ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 0.95$) was significantly higher than the score for the two groups (2,4) that had received the vignettes with no FWAs ($M = 1.45$, $SD = .96$), $p < .001$. For the perceived firm size question, participants were asked to rate from 1 to 5, where 1 indicated a startup and 5 indicated a large company. The results showed that for the two groups (1,2) that had received the vignettes with Large Companies, the mean score on the perceived firm size question ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.8$) was significantly higher than the score for the two groups (3,4) that had received vignettes with Startups ($M = 2.16$, $SD = 1.27$). These results indicate that the manipulation check was successful. Details can be found in [Table 3](#).

Table 3: Manipulation Check Results

	Groups 2,4	Groups 1,3	t-value	p-value	Mean difference	95% CI of the difference
Perceived Flexibility	without FWAs (N=73, M=1.45, SD=0.96)	with FWAs (N=81, M=4.26, SD=0.95)	-18.27	<.001	-2.81	[-3.11, -2.50]
	Groups 3,4	Groups 1,2	t-value	p-value	Mean difference	95% CI of the difference
Perceived Firm Size	Startup (N=75, M=2.16, SD=1.27)	Large Company (N=79, M=4.33, SD=.80)	-12.6	<.001	-2.17	[-2.51, -1.83]

N, Sample Size; M, Mean; SD, Standard Deviation

Next, a correlation matrix was constructed in [Table 4](#) to initially examine the relationships between the various independent, dependent, and additional variables in the study. The FWAs group was significantly and positively correlated with Interest Value ($r = .380$, $p < .001$), Application Value ($r = .285$, $p < .001$), General Employer Attractiveness ($r = .355$, $p < .001$), Job Acceptance Intentions ($r = .262$, $p < .001$), as well as with the Economic Value ($r = .214$, $p < .001$), indicating that the presence of FWAs is associated with higher ratings in these areas. Significant positive correlations were found between Attractiveness and all the other variables, except the Firm Size, indicating that the 5 values are significantly associated with the attractiveness of a company, but not the size of the company.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix

Variable	FWAs	Firm Size	General Attractiveness	Job Acceptance Intentions	Economic Value	Interest Value	Development Value	Application Value	Social Value
FWAs	1	.38	.355**	.262**	.214**	.380**	.137	.285**	-.104
Firm Size	.38	1	-.106	.001	.246**	-.097	-.051	-.184*	-.001
General Employer Attractiveness	.355**	-.106	1	.740**	.422*	.648**	.456**	.532**	.235**
Job Acceptance Intentions	.262**	.001	.740**	1	.358**	.486**	.259**	.342**	.259**
Economic Value	.214**	.246**	.422*	.358**	1	.313**	.255**	.215**	.260**
Interest Value	.380**	-.097	.648**	.486**	.313**	1	.337**	.553**	.104
Development Value	.137	-.051	.456**	.259**	.255**	.337**	1	.371**	.224**
Application Value	.285**	-.184*	.532**	.342**	.215**	.553**	.371**	1	.115
Social Value	-.104	-.001	.235**	.259**	.260**	.104	.224**	.115	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4.2. Main Analysis

For the main analysis, we re-categorized the participants into four groups. We simplified the groups into: companies with FWAs and without FWAs, and startups versus large companies. The descriptive statistics for General Attractiveness and Job Acceptance Intentions across the four groups (FWAs and non-FWAs, Large Companies and Startups) are summarized in [Table 5](#) and depicted in [Figure 3](#) for General Employer Attractiveness and [Figure 4](#) for Job Acceptance Intentions. This table reveals that both General Employer Attractiveness and Job Acceptance Intentions are higher in organizations offering FWAs, compared to those that do not, with startups showing slightly higher means than large companies within each category.

Specifically, for General Employer Attractiveness, large companies with FWAs have a mean score of 3.54 (SD = 1.04), while startups with FWAs have a slightly higher mean

score of 3.91 (SD = 0.70). Large companies without FWAs have a mean score of 2.94 (SD = 0.94), and startups without FWAs have a mean score of 3.05 (SD = 1.07). Similarly, for Job Acceptance Intentions, large companies with FWAs have a mean score of 3.51 (SD = 1.09), whereas startups with FWAs have a higher mean score of 3.87 (SD = 0.71). Large companies without FWAs have a mean score of 3.08 (SD = 0.85), and startups without FWAs have a mean score of 3.04 (SD = 1.02).

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Dependent Variables

Variable		Groups	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
General Employer Attractiveness	FWAs	Large Company	3.5426	1.03643	43
		Startup	3.9123	0.70470	38
		Total	3.7160	0.90999	81
	Non-FWAs	Large Company	2.9444	0.93774	36
		Startup	3.0450	1.06621	37
		Total	2.9954	0.99922	73
Job Acceptance Intentions	FWAs	Large Company	3.5116	1.08829	43
		Startup	3.8684	0.71361	38
		Total	3.6790	0.94310	81
	Non-FWAs	Large Company	3.0833	0.84937	36
		Startup	3.0405	1.01638	37
		Total	3.0616	0.93149	73

Figure 3: Estimated Marginal Means of General Employer Attractiveness

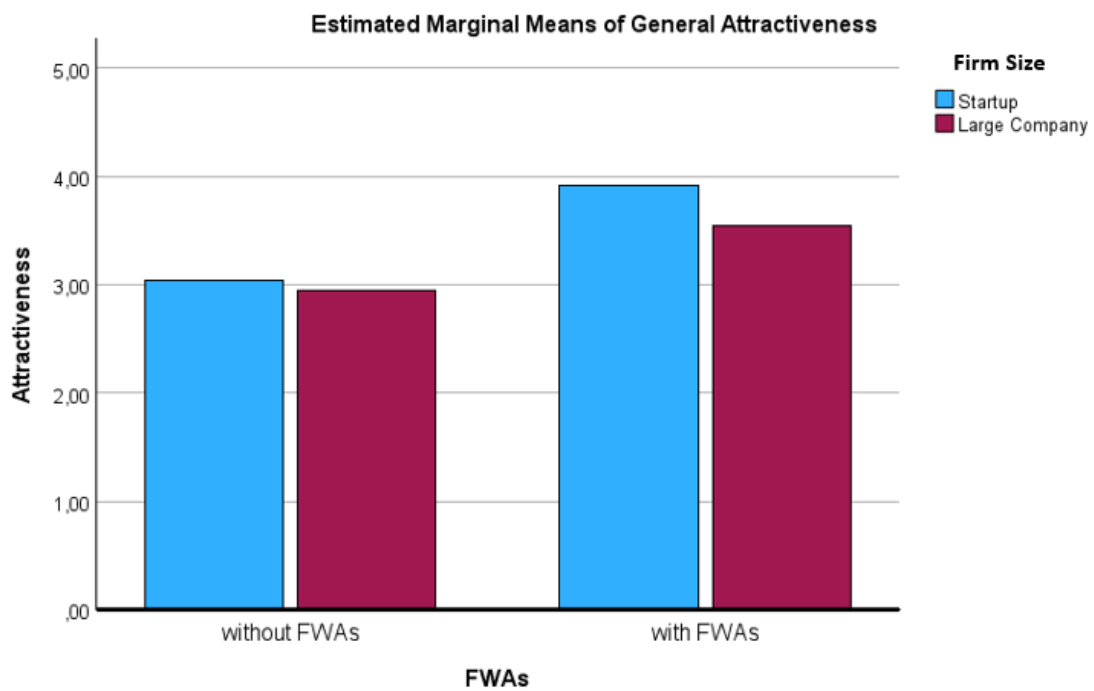
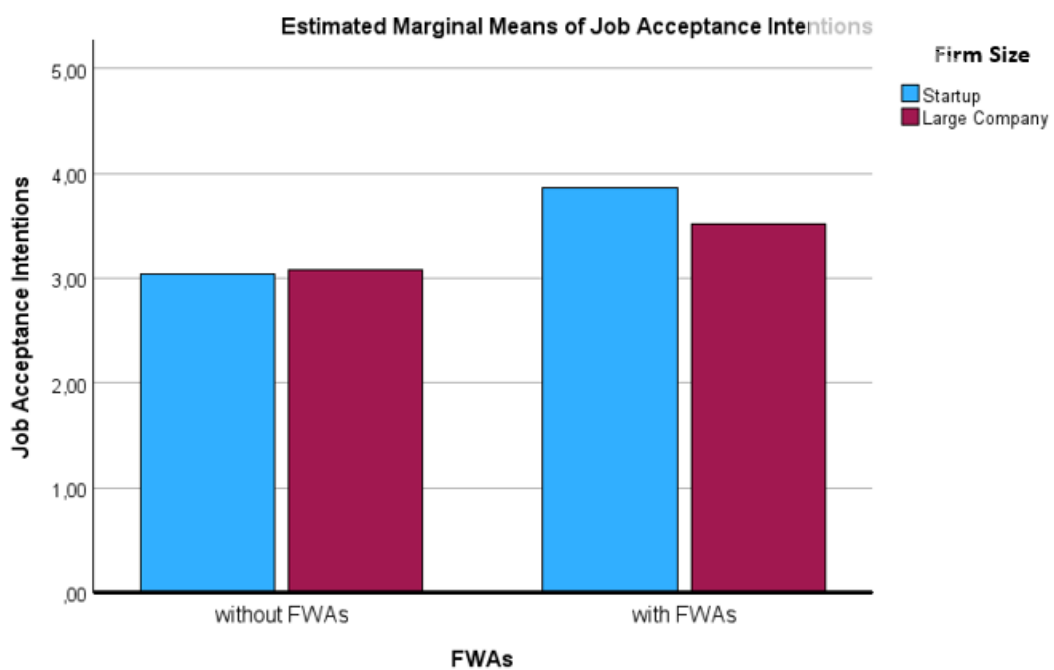


Figure 4: Estimated Marginal Means of Job Acceptance Intentions



Two ANOVA were conducted to assess the significance of FWAs on General Employer Attractiveness and Job Acceptance Intentions and answer our first hypothesis which supports that “The presence of Flexible Working Arrangements in an organization leads to increased Employer Attractiveness”. It was found that FWAs have a significant effect on both Job Acceptance Intentions ($p < .001$) and Attractiveness ($p < .001$). This indicates that FWAs significantly influence both job acceptance intentions and attractiveness. Thus Hypothesis 1 is supported. The results are presented in [Table 6](#).

Table 6: ANOVA for General Employer Attractiveness & Job Acceptance Intentions

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
General Employer Attractiveness	Corrected Model	19.939	1	19.939	21.940	<.001
	Intercept	1729.514	1	1729.514	1903.121	<.001
	FWAs	19.939	1	19.939	21.940	<.001
Job Acceptance Intentions	Corrected Model	14.634	1	14.634	16.647	<.001
	Intercept	1744.582	1	1744.582	1984.454	<.001
	FWAs	14.634	1	14.634	16.647	<.001

A two-way factorial ANOVA was conducted to examine the effects of FWAs and Firm Size on Job Acceptance Intentions and General Employer Attractiveness and answer our second hypothesis which was that the “Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) will have a stronger positive impact on Employer Attractiveness in large companies compared to startups”. The interaction term FWAs*Firm Size does not have a significant main effect on Job Acceptance Intentions ($p = .188$) nor General Employer Attractiveness ($p = .382$). This indicates that the different Firm Sizes do not significantly influence the attractiveness or job acceptance intentions. Thus, hypothesis 2 is rejected. The results are presented in [Table 7](#).

Table 7: Two-way Factorial ANOVA for General Employer Attractiveness & Job Acceptance Intentions

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
General Employer Attractiveness	Corrected Model	45.768 ^a	3	7.627	8.462	<.001
	Intercept	7880.772	1	1731.733	1921.397	<.001
	FWAs	39.843	1	20.574	22.828	<.001
	Firm Size	.007	1	2.119	2.351	.127
	FWAs*Firm Size	6.620	1	0.693	0.769	.382
Job Acceptance Intentions	Corrected Model	17.236 ^b	3	5.745	6.577	.006
	Intercept	1747.099	1	1747.099	2000.106	<.001
	FWAs	15.118	1	15.118	17.307	<.001
	Firm Size	0.945	1	0.945	1.081	.300
	FWAs*Firm Size	1.530	1	1.530	1.751	.188

^a *R Squared* = .145 (*Adjusted R Squared* = .128)

^b *R Squared* = .0116 (*Adjusted R Squared* = .099)

4.3. Supplementary Analysis

Previous analyses, such as the correlation matrix, showed that FWAs were related to a multiple of the 5 values of EA, but these relationships were potentially confounded by the intercorrelations among the variables. To address this issue, we performed a partial correlation analysis. We computed the partial correlation coefficients between FWAs and each value of EA (Economic Value, Interest Value, Application Value, Development Value, and Social Value), while controlling for the other four, to understand whether FWAs independently affect each value of EA. [Table 8](#) shows the results.

Table 8: Partial Correlation Analysis between 5 Values of EA and FWAs

5 Values of EA	Partial Correlation (r)	Significance (p-value)
Economic Value	.148	.071
Interest Value	.250	.002
Development Value	.001	.987
Application Value	.102	.213
Social Value	-.193	.018

Notably, the partial correlation between FWAs and Interest Value was significant and positive ($r = .250$, $p = .002$), indicating that FWAs have a unique and significant positive association with Interest Value when controlling for the other EA values. Also, interestingly, the partial correlation between FWAs and Social Value was significant and negative ($r = -.193$, $p = .018$). All the other results for Economic Value ($r = .148$, $p = .071$), Development Value ($r = .001$, $p = .987$), and Application Value ($r = .102$, $p = .213$) indicate a positive but not significant relationship with FWAs. These findings highlight that FWAs have a distinct and significant positive association with Interest Value but a significant negative association with Social Value, suggesting that FWAs can simultaneously enhance and harm certain aspects of EA.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Conclusion of the Results

First Hypothesis

This study revealed several critical insights regarding the role of Flexible Working Arrangements in enhancing Employer Attractiveness. Firstly, the study confirmed that FWAs significantly enhance General Employer Attractiveness and Job Acceptance Intentions among job seekers both in startups and large companies. Participants rated companies with FWAs higher on metrics of attractiveness compared to those without such arrangements. The positive impact of FWAs on EA aligns with the results of previous research, such as the study by Thompson et al., (2014). This was expected and could be explained by the evolving job market dynamics and the increasing normalization of FWAs across all types of companies. Job seekers who value FWAs may be more willing to forego opportunities at companies that do not offer FWAs, confident that they will be able to find such arrangements elsewhere.

Second Hypothesis

Secondly, contrary to the first hypothesis, the study found no significant difference in the effect of FWAs on EA between large companies and startups. This suggests that FWAs are generally beneficial for both and their impact does not significantly vary based on the size of the firm. Also, surprisingly, even though the result was not significant, startups had slightly higher scores of attractiveness compared to large companies regardless of whether they offer FWAs. These results contradict previous studies that suggested large companies are in general more attractive than startups (Tumasjan et al., 2011; Moser et al., 2017; Sauermann, 2017) showing that both can achieve similar levels of attractiveness. This divergence could be attributed to several factors.

Firstly, the sample in our study consisted primarily of young job seekers who are just beginning their careers. These individuals may be more focused on securing employment to kickstart their careers rather than having specific preferences for the size of the company. Secondly, preferences among job seekers may have shifted, with modern candidates favoring the relaxed environments typically found in startups over traditional corporate life, which was more common in the past and among older generations. Lastly, our sample included students who study business and entrepreneurship, and they could be considered as

entrepreneurial-minded people. Moser et al. (2017) and Sauermann (2017) found that individuals with an entrepreneurial mindset are more inclined to work for startups rather than established companies. These preferences could explain the slightly higher scores for startups in our study.

Potential Integration of FWAs in the EA framework

The partial correlation analysis revealed additional insights regarding the FWAs and their relationship with the five values of EA. We found that FWAs positively and significantly correlate with Interest Value, but negatively with Social Value indicating that FWAs can simultaneously enhance and harm specific factors of EA. The other factors, Economic Value, Development Value, and Application Value, while showing positive correlations, did not have a significant influence.

In our research the Interest Value is connected with the work environment and whether the employees would feel happy and excited about it. Thus, it indicates that FWAs can enhance the perceived enjoyment within the work environment. Although previous studies have shown that FWAs might result in feelings of isolation or disconnection from company culture, potentially diminishing the workplace's overall attractiveness (Golden et al., 2008) our findings highlight that the positive aspects of FWAs outweigh these concerns for potential employees. However, even though the correlation with Interest Value was significant, the $r = .250$ indicates a weak relationship with FWAs. As a rule of thumb, a correlation needs to be above $r > .70$ to be considered strong and justify the potential integration of FWAs into Interest Value. Thus, we cannot clearly state that FWAs can be integrated into the EA framework, but they can be considered, at least for now, as an external attribute that influences EA.

On the other hand, Social Value, which is negatively and significantly associated with FWAs, was measured by whether the employer is customer-oriented or whether it produces high-quality products. This negative association could suggest that job seekers perceive a conflict between the flexibility offered by FWAs and the employer's emphasis on maintaining high standards in product quality and customer service. It may imply that when organizations promote FWAs, potential employees might doubt the organization's ability to ensure consistent product quality and customer focus.

In summary, FWAs enhance the EA of a company. They do not have a significant differential impact based on the size of the firm, being equally beneficial for both startups

and large companies. FWAs significantly and positively influence Interest Value, while they have a negative impact on Social Value. The other values did not show a significant unique influence.

5.2. Implications for Theory

The findings from this study have several important implications for theory, particularly in the domains of employer branding, employer attractiveness, HRM (Human Resources Management), and recruitment.

Firstly, we provided empirical support that FWAs can enhance employer attractiveness in both startups and large companies. This finding extends the EA framework established in previous research, offering a fresh perspective by including FWAs. It extends past studies that have identified several positive aspects of FWAs, such as increased job satisfaction (Possenriede & Plantenga, 2011), organizational commitment (Scandura & Lankau, 1997), decreased absenteeism (Krausz and Freibach, 1983), and decreased likelihood of leaving the organization (Teo, Lim, and Wai, 1998) by adding employer attractiveness to this list.

Secondly, this study provides new insights into the debate over whether the firm size matters on attractiveness, between large firms and startups. Our findings indicate that large companies and startups are equally attractive, regardless of whether they offer FWAs. This challenges previous research, which suggested that large companies are generally more attractive (Tusmajan et al., 2011; Moser et al., 2017; Sauermaun, 2017). Young job seekers today may not be as inclined to pursue corporate jobs and may be equally satisfied with either a flatter or more bureaucratic hierarchy. This finding is valuable for scholars studying the differences between large firms and startups, and future research could investigate this change to better understand the motives and preferences of younger job seekers towards different sizes of companies.

Lastly, we provide new insights into the relationship between FWAs and the five EA Values proposed by Berthon et al. (2005), by testing the relationships between them. The findings suggest that FWAs can positively impact elements of Interest Value and negatively Social Value, while no significant relationship was found with the other values. This helps to delineate which aspects of EA are enhanced by FWAs, offering a clearer picture of their specific impacts on EA. However, our additional analysis exploring the potential integration

of FWAs into the EA framework was not successful; we cannot state that FWAs can be integrated into the existing EA factors, as the only positive and significant relationship with Interest Value is weak.

To sum up, this study makes significant theoretical contributions by expanding the EA literature through the exploration of FWAs. It provides new insights into the relationship of FWAs with EA values and challenges previous findings and assumptions about the relationship between EA and firm size.

5.3. Implications for Practitioners

We offer valuable insights for practitioners, particularly in HR departments in organizations. Understanding the significant role of FWAs in enhancing EA can help practitioners develop more effective strategies to attract and retain talent in the competitive war for talent.

Our results suggest that FWAs have a significant positive impact on attracting young talent. Consequently, as FWAs significantly enhance both General Attractiveness and Job Acceptance Intentions, HR professionals who work either for large companies or startups can leverage these arrangements to boost their attractiveness, improve their EB initiatives, or differentiate themselves from competitors. Emphasizing FWAs in job advertisements, career pages, and recruitment materials can attract a broader and more diverse talent pool. By implementing attractive FWA policies, large organizations and startups can reduce the perceived disadvantages potential employees may associate with them.

Additionally, given that FWAs are positively correlated with Interest Value they could emphasize these aspects in their employee value propositions by highlighting increased enjoyment in the work environment. Thus, if an organization wants to increase the Interest Value could likely increase the offer of FWAs. Conversely, since Social Value has a negative relationship with FWAs, organizations aiming to boost their Social Value might benefit from balancing or reducing the offer of FWAs.

Regarding the RTO mandates that large established companies have started pursuing, practitioners should consider balancing RTO policies with flexible work options to maintain employee satisfaction and avoid driving talent to startups and smaller businesses. If large companies continue with strict RTO policies without offering FWAs, they will likely lose talent as their attractiveness diminishes. Moreover, since the demand for flexible work

arrangements is likely to increase, organizations should stay ahead of these trends by remaining adaptable and open to new forms of flexibility.

There is a final point for practitioners to consider when increasing the offer of FWAs. While this study highlights the benefits related to the attractiveness of FWAs, it is crucial to also recognize potential drawbacks regarding their implementation to achieve the best results. FWAs can lead to operational challenges; administrative burdens; employee abuse; and significant initial costs Maxwell et al., (2007). For that reason, practitioners should balance the offer and implementation of FWAs considering their resources, time, and ability to manage them effectively.

In short, the practical implications of this study highlight the critical role of FWAs in enhancing EA, making them crucial for attracting young talent. HR practitioners should emphasize FWAs in recruitment efforts and balance RTO policies with flexible options to avoid losing talent. FWAs can boost Interest Value, but organizations aiming to enhance Social Value may need to balance or reduce FWAs accordingly. Finally, to achieve the best results from FWAs, practitioners should carefully manage their implementation, considering potential drawbacks.

5.4. Limitations & Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of FWAs in enhancing EA, several limitations must be acknowledged to guide future research. Firstly, the sample used in this study primarily consisted of young job seekers, specifically recent graduates and students in the Netherlands. This demographic may have distinct preferences and attitudes towards FWAs that differ from those of more experienced or older workers. Future research could include a more diverse sample encompassing various age groups, career stages, and geographic locations to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

Secondly, the study employed a 2x2 vignette experiment to assess the impact of FWAs on EA. While vignettes allow for controlled manipulation of variables, they may not fully capture the complexities of real-world circumstances. Participants' responses to hypothetical scenarios may differ from their behavior in actual job selection situations. Future research could employ field experiments to observe how FWAs influence job choices in real-world examples. Moreover, in this study, we treated FWAs as a binary variable, indicating whether a company offers flexible working packages or not. While the two-level

approach allowed us to make general suggestions about the perception of FWAs, the specific impact of each type of arrangement, such as telework, hybrid work, or working from anywhere, remains unknown. Therefore, conducting a multi-level experiment of flextime and flexplace could provide further insights into the effects of each specific practice on EA. Alternatively, considering FWAs as a continuum rather than a binary variable could also offer a better understanding. A continuum approach would recognize varying degrees of flexibility, ranging from highly flexible work arrangements to traditional work structures. Consequently, future research could adopt a multi-level or a continuum approach to measure the degree of flexibility in work arrangements more precisely.

Lastly, the multi-item measurements used to assess each variable consisted mostly of two items, and the low scores of Cronbach's alphas for Development and Social Value (.373 and .389, respectively) indicate potential issues with the internal consistency reliability of these scales. Consequently, the suggestions made based on these values may not be entirely accurate. In addition, the items used to measure each value were a combination of Berthon et al. (2005) and Pingle & Sodhi (2011) papers, which could have been selected more consistently. For instance, in our study, Social Value was measured by whether the employer is customer-oriented and produces high-quality products, rather than assessing the CSR or whether the employer uses environmentally friendly practices. Future research could also mitigate these issues by using different items to measure and assess the five values.

Additional ideas for future research could investigate potential moderating factors, such as organizational culture or signaling theory, that influence the effectiveness of FWAs in enhancing employer attractiveness. Further studies could also explore the relationship between RTO mandates and EA and the potential moderate effect of company culture. Another idea is to compare general EA perceptions of job seekers between different countries. Given that the Netherlands is a developed country with a strong economy, people there may have stricter preferences and higher standards. It would be interesting to investigate how these perceptions differ in less developed countries and whether job seekers have different priorities elsewhere.

In conclusion, while this study advances our understanding of the role of FWAs in enhancing employer attractiveness, addressing its limitations through future research can provide deeper insights and more robust evidence. Expanding the scope of research to include diverse samples, real-world contexts, and a broader range of influencing factors will

contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how FWAs shape the modern workplace.

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7. APPENDIX

1. Company Descriptions – Scenarios

Scenario 1: Large with High FWAs

Company Description:

Company A is the Dutch representation of an international telecom firm operating from Utrecht, the Netherlands. The company employs over 1000 workers, concerned with providing telecom services not only for consumers, but also for industrial clients in manufacturing (e.g., fast-moving consumer goods, consumer electronics), services (e.g., banks and insurance companies,), and not-for-profit (e.g., governments, hospitals). Internationally, company A has staff members working from different locations and in multiple countries. Company A welcomes both Dutch and international new hires.

Company A finds it important that its employees can balance professional growth with their personal well-being. For that reason it offers an array of Flexible Working Arrangements. Its employees can work remotely, opt for flexible hours, and even customize a hybrid schedule that fits their lifestyle, as long as client interests are not compromised. Its primary goal is to create an environment where employees can grow professionally while maintaining a work-life balance.

To junior employees, company A offers a clear path for progression towards more senior roles, and to familiarize with various aspects of the business. It claims to nurture its new hires' aspirations while ensuring flexibility to manage life's other commitments.

Company A has a strong reputation of offering exceptional services, and steadfast commitment to client success. Its global presence is enhanced by a robust infrastructure and a team of seasoned professionals dedicated to driving innovation and excellence.

Scenario 2: Large with Low FWAs

Company Description:

Company B is the Dutch representation of an international telecom firm operating from Utrecht, the Netherlands. The company employs over 1000 workers, concerned with providing telecom services not only for consumers, but also for industrial clients in manufacturing (e.g., fast-moving consumer goods, consumer electronics), services (e.g., banks and insurance companies,), and not-for-profit (e.g., governments, hospitals). Internationally, Company B has staff members working from different locations and in multiple countries. Company B welcomes both Dutch and international new hires.

Company B maintains a traditional approach to work arrangements. It expects its employees to work from the office during standard working hours. The organization values the importance of in-person collaboration to maintain strong team dynamics and company culture. Remote working or flexible hours are not encouraged, as Company B prioritizes having its workforce onsite during business hours for better coordination and communication.

To junior employees, company B offers a clear path for progression towards more senior roles, and to familiarize with various aspects of the business. It claims to nurture its new hires' aspirations while ensuring a structured and stable work environment.

Company B has a strong reputation of offering exceptional services and a steadfast commitment to client success. Its global presence is enhanced by a robust infrastructure and a team of seasoned professionals dedicated to driving innovation and excellence.

Scenario 3: Startup with High FWAs

Company Description:

Company C is the representation of a telecom startup operating from Utrecht, the Netherlands. This startup employs around 25 employees, concerned with providing telecom services not only for consumers, but also for industrial clients in manufacturing (e.g., fast-moving consumer goods, consumer electronics), services industries (e.g., banks and insurance companies), and not-for-profit (e.g., governments, hospitals). Company C welcomes both Dutch and international new hires.

Company C finds it important that its employees can balance professional growth with their personal well-being. For that reason, it offers an array of Flexible Working Arrangements. Its employees can work remotely, opt for flexible hours, and even customize a hybrid schedule that fits their lifestyle, as long as client interests are not compromised. Its primary goal is to create an environment where employees can grow professionally while maintaining a work-life balance.

To junior employees, company C offers a clear path for progression towards more senior roles, and to familiarize with various aspects of the business. It claims to nurture their new hires' aspirations while ensuring flexibility to manage life's other commitments.

Company C is developing a reputation for offering exceptional services, and steadfast commitment to client success. Thanks to its partnerships with some well-known industry players, it can offer a robust infrastructure and a team of seasoned professionals dedicated to driving innovation and excellence.

Scenario 4: Startup with Low FWAs

Company Description:

Company D is the representation of a telecom startup operating from Utrecht, the Netherlands. This startup employs around 25 employees, concerned with providing telecom services not only for consumers, but also for industrial clients in manufacturing (e.g., fast-moving consumer goods, consumer electronics), services industries (e.g., banks and insurance companies), and not-for-profit (e.g., governments, hospitals). Company D welcomes both Dutch and international new hires.

Company D maintains a traditional approach to work arrangements. It expects its employees to work from the office during standard working hours. The organization values the importance of in-person collaboration to maintain strong team dynamics and company culture. Remote working or flexible hours are not encouraged, as Company D prioritizes

having its workforce onsite during business hours for better coordination and communication.

To junior employees, company D offers a clear path for progression towards more senior roles, and to familiarize with various aspects of the business. It claims to nurture its new hires' aspirations while ensuring a structured and stable work environment.

Company D is developing a reputation for offering exceptional services, and steadfast commitment to client success. Thanks to its partnerships with some well-known industry players, it can offer a robust infrastructure and a team of seasoned professionals dedicated to driving innovation and excellence.

2. Questionnaire

Intro

Welcome to our Online Survey - Experiment

This survey is part of an experiment for my thesis project: on the preferences of job seekers.

The participation is voluntary, and it will take about 7 minutes to complete.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Questions or comments? Please contact Eleni Sonidou at +306974187452 or e.sonidou@students.uu.nl

Block 1: Demographics

Q1: With which gender do you identify?

Man

Woman

Non-Binary

Prefer not to say/ Other

Q2: How old are you?

Q3: Are you currently looking for a job, or will you enter the job market in the coming year?

Yes

No

Q4: What is/was your field of study?

- Humanities (Art, History, Language, Literature, Law, Philosophy, Theology, Media)
- Social Sciences (Economics, Geography, Psychology, Sociology)
- Natural Sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Astronomy, Physics)
- Other, namely

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Block 2: Intro for company descriptions

Please read very carefully the following company descriptions, then answer the questions from 1 to 7 based on your preferences.

Randomizer: 1 of 4 company descriptions will be provided to each participant; questions and answers after each description are the same; the manipulation check has different validation for each scenario.

Block 3: Manipulation Check

Now, after you have carefully read the description you need to answer the survey based on your preferences. You need to scale the preferences from 1 to 5. Please respond with honesty.

Q5: I feel that this employer is a large company.

- strongly disagree (I feel that it is a startup)
- somewhat disagree
- neither agree or disagree
- somewhat agree
- strongly agree (I feel that it is a large company)

Q6: I feel that this employer allows its employees to work at home and decide about their own work hours.

- strongly disagree
- somewhat disagree
- neither agree or disagree
- somewhat agree
- strongly agree

Block 4: Perceived EA Values

Economic Value:

Q7: I feel that with this employer I will get an above average basic salary.

- strongly disagree
- somewhat disagree
- neither agree or disagree
- somewhat agree
- strongly agree

Q8: feel that in this employer I will get an attractive overall compensation package.

- strongly disagree
- somewhat disagree
- neither agree or disagree
- somewhat agree
- strongly agree

Interest value:

Q9: I feel that this would be a happy work environment.

- strongly disagree
- somewhat disagree
- neither agree or disagree
- somewhat agree
- strongly agree

Q10: I would be excited in working at this environment.

- strongly disagree
- somewhat disagree
- neither agree or disagree
- somewhat agree
- strongly agree

Development value:

Q11: I feel that this employer would offer me a springboard for future employment.

- strongly disagree
- somewhat disagree
- neither agree or disagree

somewhat agree

strongly agree

Q12: I would feel self-confident working for this employer.

strongly disagree

somewhat disagree

neither agree or disagree

somewhat agree

strongly agree

Application value:

Q13: I feel that this employer would both value and make use of my creativity.

strongly disagree

somewhat disagree

neither agree or disagree

somewhat agree

strongly agree

Q14: I feel that I would have the opportunity to apply what I learned at a tertiary institution in this employer.

strongly disagree

somewhat disagree

neither agree or disagree

somewhat agree

strongly agree

Social value:

Q15: I feel that the employer produces high-quality products and services.

strongly disagree

somewhat disagree

neither agree or disagree

somewhat agree

strongly agree

Q16: I feel that the employer is customer-orientated.

- strongly disagree
- somewhat disagree
- neither agree or disagree
- somewhat agree
- strongly agree

Block 5: Perceived General Attractiveness

Q17: Based on the company description I read, this employer is attractive to me as a place for employment.

- strongly disagree
- somewhat disagree
- neither agree or disagree
- somewhat agree
- strongly agree

Q18: For me, this employer would be a good place to work.

- strongly disagree
- somewhat disagree
- neither agree or disagree
- somewhat agree
- strongly agree

Q19: A job at this employer is very appealing to me.

- strongly disagree
- somewhat disagree
- neither agree or disagree
- somewhat agree
- strongly agree

Block 6: Job Acceptance Intentions

Q20: Based on the description I read, If I had an offer from this employer, I would accept it.

- strongly disagree
- somewhat disagree

neither agree or disagree

somewhat agree

strongly agree

Q21: Please rate the likelihood that you would accept a job offer from this employer if it were offered.

strongly disagree

somewhat disagree

neither agree or disagree

somewhat agree

strongly agree

End of survey

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.

Your response has been recorded.