

Job satisfaction and work-life balance: An explorative study on remote workers

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Abstract

Purpose

Our knowledge about distributed teams is continuously growing. Working remotely has been applauded thus far, as it would lead to more efficient work processes and reduce organizational costs. However, whereas the organizational benefits of remote work have been emphasized in previous studies, little is yet known about how it influence employees and their families. Because organizations start embracing remote working although the exact pros and contras are still unclear, more research is needed on the impact of remote work on working life and how it are related to job satisfaction.

The goal of this research is to get a better understanding about two important issues amongst those working remotely namely: job satisfaction and work-life balance issues. Additionally the influence of cultural differences on these topics is researched.

Furthermore, an internal analysis will be executed at GoalGorilla to examine to which extent they are ready for hiring fully remote employees.

Method

This research is based on three different sources of information: Scientific and non-scientific literature, questionnaire, and in-depth interviews. For both subjects, job satisfaction and work-life balance, it is important to keep an open mind to support this, as there are no preconceived ideas of what the answer to the research questions would be.

Consistent with the fact that this study is explorative and the goal is to get a rich analysis of real-life cases, a questionnaire in combination with in-depth interviews is conducted, as a data collection technique. The data gathered with the questionnaire are analyzed by using the tools WEKA and Tableau. The data gathered during the interviews are analyzed based on the Grounded Theory.

Conclusion

Job satisfaction

Remote offices are increasing in populairty. Different scientific studies showed that flexible workers have higher levels of overall job satisfaction. During this research the influencing factors for remote workers on their job satisfaction are explored.

A positive relation is found between job satisfaction and the type of work, freedom of work, appreciation, autonomy, interpersonal trust, and income. The influence of supervision and promotions where expected to positively relate, but the supervision is found to be not relevant and promotions are found to only have a slightly positive influence.

Work-life balance

During this study two interesting issues were found. First, the majority ??of remote workers?? is happy with work-life balance even though it comes with quite some challenges. Second, Work-life balance is an important and often discussed topic under remote workers.

Some influencing factors on work-life balance were found during this research. First the high influence of knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics. Second, the engagement of the company is found to be important to the employees work-life balance. The last influencing factor which is specific

for one group, is traveling. Digital nomads tend to build a different work-life balances then people working from a fixed location.

Cultural differences

Cultural diversity is a primary antecedent, along with geographical distribution, of distributed teams. Cultural identity causes differences in beliefs, expectations, basic assumptions, and behavior and can also affect ones perspective on job satisfaction and work-life balance.

During this research not enough evidence was found to conclude whether a difference is experienced in culture according to job satisfaction or work-life balance. A more in-depth study would be needed. However it is found that the influences of language and different work ethics do have a high influence on remote workers, and this is believed to be an in interesting field for further research.

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1 Introduction

In light of the increasing de-centralization and globalization of work processes, many organizations have responded to their dynamic environments by introducing distributed teams. Rapid development of new communication technologies such as the internet has accelerated this trend (Duarte & Snyder 1999; Gibson & Cohen 2003; Hertel et al. 2005). This also brought a numerous amount of popular and scientific literature about the use of these new technologies (Lurey & Raisinghani 2001, Sproull & Kiesler 1991). Distributed teams, an expression which was almost unheard of two decades ago, but today serves as a critical mechanism for integrating information, making decisions, and implementing actions around the world (Canney & Ward, 1999). A distributed team is defined as; a group of people who interact through interdependent tasks guided by common purpose and work across space, time, and organizational boundaries with links strengthened by webs of communication technologies (Lipnack & Stamps, 1997).

This new way of working introduces new challenges and benefits. Many successful startups have already embraced 100% remote work (Team, 2015). And more and more companies are realizing that remote work is not just convenient, it is often much more effective (Chia, 2016). Being realistic, most of the corporate world is unlikely to make a shift towards working with complete remote teams anytime soon. With the fast changing markets and new requirements of younger employees, partially due to globalization, start-ups can jump into new and challenging opportunities. The objective of this study is to get a better understanding about two important issues amongst remote working, job satisfaction and work-life balance issues. For this study, remote workers were defined as employees who work in a physically separate location from their managers (Staples, 2001). Digital nomads are not a specific field of interest but will be part of the research as well. They will be explained in this research as people who use telecommunications technologies to earn a living and, more generally, conduct their life in a nomadic manner (Mohn, 2017).

It goes without saying that over the past two decades developments in information and communication technology have had a huge impact on working life (Demerouti et al., 2014). Employees are expected to decide for themselves when they work (schedule flexibility), where they work (e.g., telecommuting), and by which communication tool/medium (smartphone, email, videoconference) they work (Baarne et al. 2010; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker 2012).

Different studies showed that flexible workers had higher levels of overall job satisfaction (Hill 1998; Hyman & Summers 2004 ; Igarria & Guimaraes 1999) and organizational commitment (Grover & Crooker 1995; Roehling et al. 2001) than their counterparts who did not work flexibly and in the case of those working reduced hours, lower levels of stress also (Almer & Kaplan 2002; Thomas & Ganster 1995) (Kossek et al., 2010). The organizational culture and its impact on employee-related variables such as satisfaction, commitment, cohesion, strategy implementation, performance, among others. However relatively few empirical studies have examined these relationships (Lund, 2003). In this study job satisfaction is defined as a function of the perceived relationship between what one wants and one's job and what one perceives it is offering (Locke, 1969).

For the majority of people, work constitutes the central life interest. But work though central is only one of the several interests that human beings pursue in life. When the demands of work hamper the pursuit of other life interests, it is likely to create a crisis and the resultant stresses and strains among the employees. Work interferes with family life and vice versa (Aldous 1969; Piotrkowski et al. 1987; Staines 1980; Crouter 1984). These iterative processes may have both positive and negative consequences. For most people, work is the means for a better life and for improving the well-being of the family. Work-life balance can offer individuals more choice and organizations greater flexibility in organizing their resources. The reactions to work and family demands differ among people across countries and continents at various levels of economic development (Chandra, 2012).

Worklife balance is a central concern in everyday discourses (Greenhaus & Allen 2011; Greenhaus et al. 2003; Guest 2002; Kossek et al. 2014; Maertz Jr & Boyar 2011). The increase in interest in this

field is in part driven by concerns that unbalanced work-family relationships can result in reduced health and performance outcomes for individuals, families, and organizations (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). This study will conceptualize Worklife balance as an individual's perceptions of how well his or her life roles are balanced. This conceptualization of individuals subjectively gauging balance between the work and the rest of their life (Guest, 2002).

Cultural diversity is a primary antecedent, along with geographical distribution, of distributed teams. However, it can also be a potential antecedent for effectiveness. Gurung & Prater (2006) suggest that cultural factors are important determinants for the success of any distributed project. Culture is so important to consider because it acts as a perceptual filter and cognitive frame through which individuals perceive and interact with the world. Essentially, cultural identity causes differences in beliefs, expectations, basic assumptions, and behavior and these differences influence distributed teams (Scott & Wildman, 2015). These differences can also affect one's perspective on job satisfaction and work-life balance. Cultural differences have been defined in many different ways by many different authors. One of the most popular is Hofstede (1980) definition: the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from another.

Previous to this study, an empirical literature study has been performed based on the question '*What are challenges for individuals working as part of a distributed it-team; Theory vs practice?*' (Stevens, 2017). The findings and conclusions found in this research create the fundamentals for this project.

GoalGorilla

GoalGorilla is a company which designs and develops on-line solutions that meet the needs of the clients target audience. They are located with almost 30 people in Enschede and Amsterdam and serve an international client base. Their goal is to become the most appealing digital agency in the universe, and enjoy their journey of professional and personal growth. They want to achieve this by delivering web solutions that amaze our clients and, even more important, reach and engage their users.

After a try-out of working remotely in Bali, and just setting up distributed teams between Amsterdam and Enschede, they are curious if a next step is possible. An internship is carried out to obtain knowledge about the company. Being able to combine the knowledge obtained during the scientific part of this project. The findings of this part can be found in chapter 7.

1.1 Research goal

The goal of this research is to get a better understanding about two important issues amongst those working remotely, job satisfaction and work-life balance issues. Additionally the influence of cultural differences on these topics are researched.

In the previous research, it was found that these aforementioned two factors are important to remote workers. Most of the interviewees, named both these factors. Job satisfaction was deemed the most important advantage and work-life balance the hardest issue to overcome.

Furthermore, an internal analysis will be executed at GoalGorilla to get examine if they are ready for hiring fully remote employees.

1.2 Motivation

Our knowledge about distributed teams is continuously growing. In a recent literature review it is stated that areas such as leadership, action processes, and knowledge management that were previously labeled as gaps (Martins et al., 2004) have now received considerable attention (Gilson et al., 2015). Researchers also have heeded the calls to integrate new settings, samples, methodologies, and theories.

Likewise, within some key constructs, namely, leadership and trust, findings have coalesced (Gilson et al., 2015). In previous research it was revealed, that some aspects mentioned by interviewees were not mentioned in the same amount by scientific literature. The main topics mentioned by interviewees were that they found it difficult to achieve a good work-life balance and, on the other hand, found to have high levels of job satisfaction. Working remotely has been applauded thus far, as it would lead to more efficient work processes and reduce organizational costs (Rennecker & Godwin, 2005). However, whereas the organizational benefits of remote work have been emphasized in previous studies, little is yet known about how it influence employees and their families (Demerouti et al., 2014). Because organizations start embracing remote working although the exact pros and contras are still unclear, more research is needed on the impact of remote work on working life and how it is related to job satisfaction (Demerouti et al., 2014).

2 Related work

Distributed teams, an expression which was almost unheard of two decades ago, today serves as a critical mechanism in many companies (Canney & Ward, 1999). The goal of this research is to get a better understanding of the challenges within distributed IT teams. A literature research was executed to obtain a proper understanding of the factors influencing distributed teams. To get a better sense to where the literature meets practice, interviews were carried out by Stevens (2017). Here a summary of the key findings are presented, the complete study can be requested. The research by Stevens (2017) is framed based upon the Life Cycle model of Saunders(2000), an input-process-output model which describes four general categories: input, socio-emotional, task processes, and output. In four different chapters the important variables of these categories are described in more detail. Employee (input), Trust (socio-emotional), Communication (task processes), and Leadership(task processes). These theoretical themes are then compared with reality through use of interviews in the fifth chapter.

2.1 Employee

What are the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics individuals need when working in distributed teams?

In spite of the increasing demand for virtual cooperation, still relatively little is known about the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics(KSAOs) individuals require for virtual teamwork. Literature reveals that different virtuality-related challenges converge on similar problems, mainly communication and relationship building, but the causes seem to be quite different. The KSAOs are divided in state-like and trait-like inputs, they will be described in this order(Schulze & Krumm, 2017).

State-like inputs are described by challenges, knowledge and skills, and motivation (Schulze & Krumm, 2017). Challenges described by literature are relationship building (Powell et al., 2004), effective communication(Caya et al. 2013; Martins et al. 2004), conflict management (Gibson et al. 2014;Martins & Schilpzand 2011), coordination (Powell et al., 2004), motivation (Hertel et al., 2005), trust creation(Martins & Schilpzand 2011;Zimmermann 2011), interpersonal climate (Caya et al., 2013), team innovation(e.g., Gibson & Cohen (2003)), and cohesion, trust, conflict, coordination, and team identification(Cureu et al. 2008;Hertel et al. 2005;Powell et al. (2004)). An employee working in a distributed team should possess the relevant knowledge and skill required to asses these challenges. It is described that a competent communicator will be knowledgeable about how and when to use specific media devices for collaboration, and has the skills to communicate effectively by digital means (Spitzberg, 2006). Cultural differences can be a serious challenge for virtual team work (Zimmermann, 2011). To reduce this challenge, team members need to be knowledgeable about cultural specific issues and have the skills for competent intercultural communication. Cultural adaption is found positively related to performance, most importantly in the form of adaptive communication behavior as well as language proficiency. Team members should also have knowledge about the benefits and drawbacks of (a)synchronous media for leveraging dispersed working conditions (Schulze & Krumm, 2017). Next to that, skills concerning time- and self-management are particularly important, they are found to be pivotal for constructing work life balance in dispersed working contexts (Koehne et al., 2012). Motivation towards these challenges are found important in all fields(e.g.Spitzberg (2006); Venkatesh & Bala (2008);Magnusson et al. (2014);Hertel et al. (2005)).

Trait-like inputs are described as experience and personal characteristics (Schulze & Krumm, 2017). There is a well-established relationship between individual job experience, acquired job knowledge, and job performance (Campbell et al., 1993). Millennials can be assumed to have a different set of experiences. This contributes to their knowledge and skills based on the period they were grown up in (Gilson et al., 2015). Though the gaining of experience with a medium, individuals will be able to effectively encode and decode media-specific messages which will ultimately lead to a skillfull and more effective usage of this medium(Brown et al. 2010;Carlson et al. 2013). Concerning cultural

differences, it has been shown that intercultural experience is a precursor for culturally intelligent acting (Schulze & Krumm, 2017). Furthermore, former experience with working in distributed teams is correlated positively to the performance and satisfaction (Staples, 2001). The most important trait when working in a distributed teams is openness to experience (Schulze & Krumm, 2017). Extroversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness are correlated positively as well, but to a lesser extend (O'Neill et al., 2014).

2.2 Trust

Which ways of trust development are found to be most important in distributed teams?

Successful teamwork is built on a foundation of trust. As in every relation, it should be based on everyone contributing to this relation. Each member of the team must establish trust, cultivate trust through his actions and words, and work to maintain it (Measom, 2017). Two dimensions of interpersonal trust are defined: cognition-based and affect-based (McAllister, 1995). A definition which better fits the modern world are the three components: integrity, ability, and benevolence (Greenberg et al., 2007). Next to that, there is a way of trust occurring in temporary relations. This is called swift trust (Meyerson et al., 1995). It is found that there are two factors that influence building a trustful relation in distributed teams: diverse location and electronic communication. The development of trust is correlated to the different phases of teams (Greenberg et al., 2007). It appears that distributed teams should concentrate on building cognition-based trust (integrity and ability), because it develops in an earlier stage. As a result it has a bigger impact than affect-based trust (benevolence). Development of high levels of trust in early stages contributes to a better collaboration between team members and results in higher team performance and job satisfaction. To encourage trust in early stages, communication and ability team members is truly important (Staples, 2001).

2.3 Communication

What are believed to be the factors that influence communication within distributed teams?

For distributed teams to work effectively, communication is an important requirement. People working in these teams rarely meet in person, conducting almost all of their interaction and decision making using communication technology (Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000). Identified to be the main three elements are frequency, the content of communication, and quality (Marlow et al., 2016). Although task focused communication is necessary for exchanging pertinent details for task completion, it has been argued that communication of a more interpersonal nature can foster integral affective states such as cohesion and trust (Gupta & Govindarajan 2000; Jarvenpaa & Leidner 1998). It can be concluded that the quality of the communication is the most important factor. Although, frequency and content cannot be disregarded because it is an inherent part of communication processes, it is found that the number of interactions with team members should not be too high, because this will influence the team performance negatively (Marlow et al., 2016). Next to that, important factors to enhance the different forms of content in communication are task and relational interactions. The first one is necessary but the latter is correlated to increase team performance (Keyton & Rhodes, 1997). Based on the quality of communication, it is found that face-to-face contact, understanding and adaptation to cultural differences, being careful with stereotyping, and a common language are positively related.

2.4 Leadership

How does one enhance the effectiveness of leadership?

Effective leadership influences distributed teams significantly. Being flexible, willing to let others take the lead when necessary, and being an effective communicator are found as important leadership skills (Powell et al., 2004). Team leaders need to establish positive team processes, develop supportive team

member relations, create team-based reward systems, and select only those team members who are qualified to do the work (Lurey & Raisinghani, 2001). Emerging and shared leadership are found to have positive impact on distributed teams (e.g., Gilson et al. (2015); Hoch (2014)). Six leadership skills to establish and maintain effective leadership are described. In summary: establish and maintain trust through the use of communication technology, ensure diversity in the team is understood, appreciated, and leveraged, manage virtual work-cycle and meetings, monitor team progress through the use of technology, enhance external visibility of the team and its members, and ensure individuals benefit from participating in virtual teams (Malhotra et al., 2007).

2.5 Interviews

Where does literature meets the practice?

All interviews were structured based on the PNI(Positive - Negative - Interesting) model of de Bono 1994. It was found that all the interviewees are really happy with their jobs and their working environment. The positive aspects of working remotely outweigh the negative aspects. They mentioned that, even though there are negative aspects, most were easy to overcome and probably found within collocated teams as well. The most important positive aspects mentioned by the interviewees were freedom and flexibility. Next to that, all Interviewees loved the location from which they were working, the social aspects, and not having a standard routine. Other aspects mentioned, in lesser degree however, were: being more responsible, loving the company culture, and a higher degree of self-development. Negative aspects were harder to recall for many of the interviewees. The most important negative aspect was overcoming issues related to work-life balance and timezone differences. Furthermore, the higher chance of getting lonely and having less face-to-face interaction were mentioned as less desirable aspects. Other aspects mentioned, but to an even lesser extend, were physical health issues that result from working in coffee shops, having a less predictable future, and remote-working becoming boring. The interesting points mentioned were: desire of introduction of more co-working spaces, holograms as communication method, better Internet connections, and more high-end remote working tools. Even though advancements can still be made, fact remains that all of the interviewees love their jobs resulting in none of them really wanting to change much about them.

It is found that the literature meets practice to some extent but, because scientific literature mainly highlights the challenges and solutions to these challenges and the interviewees all mentioned mainly positive aspects, a direct comparison is difficult to make. Both the interviewees and scientific research highlight different positive and negative aspects of remote work. Because of this, an interesting topic of research would for example be to find why are remote workers happier than conventional workers. Which is explored during this research.

3 Research Design

3.1 Research Question

The aforementioned issues and gaps in literature are the foundation for the following research questions:

Job satisfaction

- RQ1: What are perceived to be the main influencing factors for the high levels of job satisfaction by remote workers?

Work-life balance

- RQ2: What is the perceived influence of remote work on onces work-life balance?

Cultural Differences

- RQ3: What are perceived to be the most essential differences in cultural perspectives on job satisfaction and work-life balance?

3.2 Research method

This research focuses on the themes job satisfaction and work-life balance in the context of remote work, based on an embedded case study (Yin 2013;Scholz & Tietje 2002). In this case an embedded case study form is chosen to obtain a detail-rich, holistic, and contextualized description from multiple sources of information. This research will be based on three different sources of information: scientific and non-scientific literature, questionnaire, and in-depth interviews.

The context of this study refers to work-life balance and job satisfaction, as themes of remote working. Work-life balance is a theme which has been explored in more detail then job satisfaction. Even though both are subjects for which it is important to keep an open mind, to support this there are no preconceived ideas of what the answer to the research questions would be. Recognizing the nascent stage of knowledge on the phenomenon of interest, an exploratory case study process is designed, including the following steps:

1. Compose a questionnaire based on knowledge obtained from literature
2. Validate the questionnaire
3. Finding and defining the target audience
4. Carrying out the questionnaire to remote workers
5. Analyzing the data
6. Based on the found data, creating interview questionnaire
7. Doing a pilot interview to check the applicability of the questionnaire in a real-life context
8. Carrying out in-depth interviews
9. Analyzing the results

Consistent with the fact that this study is explorative and the goal is to get a rich analysis of real-life cases, a questionnaire in combination with in-depth interviews are conducted (King & Horrocks, 2010), as a data collection technique. A questionnaire in combination with in-depth interview technique are selected for different reasons. The questionnaire is chosen to get a broad understanding of important issues for remote workers. The combination with in-depth interviews is believed to be a suitable technique to get a deeper understanding of these subjects. The data collected with in-depth

interviews, offers a robust alternative to more traditional questionnaire methods. Through a combination of a questionnaire and interviews it is tried to get a proper understanding of real-life cases. The interviewees and questionnaire participants will be selected from different cultures, countries, jobs, ages, and companies. This is done to ensure that the interviews provided a multidimensional image. In order to structure the interviews, the choice is made to use qualitative semi-structured interviews (Drever, 1995).

3.3 The data collection process

3.3.1 Compose a questionnaire based on knowledge obtained from literature

A self-administered structured questionnaire is sent to people working remotely. The goal of this questionnaire is to obtain a proper overview of the remote-workers opinion on work-life balance and job-satisfaction. A decent understanding about important topics related to remote working was obtained by reading all different kind of literature. An in-depth literature study on this topic but knowledge was also obtained by publicly available research like books and blogs. Based on this obtained knowledge the questionnaire was designed. The questions posed in the questionnaire are explained by their respective categories and the specific questions can be found in Appendix A.

1. General information: Basic information such as demographics, relational status, job-position, working hours, and reason to work remote are collected. These data is acquired to get a decent understanding of specific groups of people answering the more detailed questions.
2. Job satisfaction: Finding what it is that makes remote workers happy and joyful in completing their daily tasks. What is the influence of payment, supervision, and work content. But also if they find being able to work remotely as one of the main factors to be happy with their job. Question based on cultural differences is added to get an idea, whether people have the feeling their interpretation is different based on job satisfaction. The questions about job satisfaction were mainly adapted from Wright & Cropanzano (1998). A few questions were added based on the findings in a previous study (Stevens, 2017).
3. Work-life Balance: Getting a better understanding if remote workers are satisfied with their work life balance and in which degree they believe remote working is an influencing part on it. In a previous study it was found that remote workers have a hard time to switch of their work, which resulted in adding questions about this (Stevens, 2017). The questions about work-life balance were adopted from Kossek et al. (2010).

All of the questions of the topics Job satisfaction and work-life balance resolves around gauging people's sentiments and tendencies using a six point Likert scale (Likert, 1932).

3.3.2 Validate the questionnaire

The questionnaire is built in Google Forms. This because it is for many people easy accessible and a familiar software. The layout of Google Forms is well shaped, and easy to work with. The first step was done by sending the questionnaire to people who are not familiar with this subject. Followed by a group which is familiar with the topic, who can evaluate if your questions successfully capture your topic. Then the survey was send to someone who is an expert on question construction, ensuring that your survey does not contain common errors such as leading, confusing or double-barreled questions. All the feedback is processed

After that, a pilot is send to a pilot group. The data collected from this is cleaned an analyzed if the questions where answered and understood well. The feedback obtained from this process is processed.

3.3.3 Finding and defining the target audience

As this study is exploratory, no underlying theoretical models are assumed. i.e., No assumptions about theoretically-grounded relations exist. Consistent with the exploratory nature of this study and because it was hoped to get a rich analysis of real-life cases, different methods of approaching people were used. The target audience is defined based on the previously explained concept of a remote worker. People will be approached through e-mailing companies and Facebook groups. The questionnaire data is accomplished through a primary source, using Google Forms as a tool. An e-mail is sent to approximately 150 companies, who have a remote work-style. The companies were selected from different sources, to prevent finding only similar companies. On different Facebook pages for remote workers and digital nomads, the questionnaire was posted as well. To reach different people, for example freelancers.

3.3.4 Carrying out the questionnaire to remote workers

The candidates are able to fill in the form when ever they want to. The format is made in Google Forms, with the setting that no personal data is needed. No personal data is needed for this research, and it is expected that it will scare people when asked for personal information.

3.3.5 Analyzing the data

The collected data is observed and data impurities will be cleaned. People have the opportunity to fill out 'Others', which can result in unusable data. The decision is made, to give people this opportunity, to really be able to explain their feelings and not force them into pre-filled options. If possible, the data will be translated to the given options, if not, the data will be deleted or translated to 'Others'. The cleaned data will be analyzed and visualized using Weka and Tableau.

3.3.6 Based on the found data, creating interview questionnaire

In order to structure the interviews, the choice was made to use qualitative semi-structured interviews (Drever, 1995). A special set of questions related to the context, scope, ect. of the project were asked in these interview based on the knowledge obtained in the questionnaire. The interview is structured based on three parts. The questions used in the interview are divided in the same categories as the in the Questionnaire.

At the end of the questionnaire there is a question if people want to contribute to an interview. The people selected for the interview is based on the percentages found in the interviews. The people are selected on the answered 'General information' questions of the questionnaire. A similar deviation is tried to keep. For example, when the percentage male was around 70 in the survey, this 70 % is tried to be the same in the interviews.

3.3.7 Doing a pilot interview to check the applicability of the questionnaire in a real-life context

The first interview is treated as a pilot. In this interview the main focus is on the reaction of a candidate to the questions. Conducting a pilot study does not guarantee success in the main study, but it does increase the likelihood. Pilot studies fulfill a range of important functions and can provide valuable insights for other researchers (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001).

3.3.8 Carrying out in-depth interviews

The interviews are semi-structured. Similar questions are asked of each interviewee, although supplementary questions can be asked as appropriate. All the interviews will be between half an hour and an hour. Based on the fact that all the interviewees live around the world, they are carried out through teleconferences. Tools as Google Hangouts, Skype and WhatsApp were used for this.

3.3.9 Analyzing the results

The data analysis of the interview was guided by the reasoning and the logic that underlies the sense-making techniques associated with less procedural versions of the grounded theory (GT) (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Specifically, an application of the techniques of coding and constant comparison as recommended by (Charmaz, 2006). These techniques helped to identify concepts grounded in the collected data and to link these concepts to higher-level categories.

GT is a qualitative method applied broadly in social sciences to construct general propositions from verbal data. This approach is exploratory and well suited for situations where the researcher does not have pre-conceived ideas. By this, GT methodologists (Charmaz, 2006) mean situations in which the researcher does not start with any hypotheses or a predefined theory which requires proof. Instead, the researcher is driven by the desire to capture all facets of the collected qualitative data and then allows the theory to emerge from the data. Coding is a way of learning to know the data. It is the process of conceptualizing the data by reading the data line-by-line and marking a segment of data with a descriptive word. Constant comparison is a process by means of which one constantly compares instances of data that are given a specific category name, with other instances of data, to see if these categories fit and are workable. This process helps in grouping the data into categories. The resulting codes and categories guide the writing up of the results and aid in improving the accuracy of the claims (Charmaz, 2006).

Grounded theory can be used for data collection and data analysis, as done in the studies of Urquhart (1997), Martin et al. (2009), and Martins & Schilpzand (2011). In other studies, like the one by Ramesh et al. (2010), it is used only for data analysis. In this case the latter approach is followed.

4 Results Questionnaire

The questionnaire is filled out 309 times by people from all different kind of backgrounds. In this part, the results of the data will be explained. First the cleaning process will be discussed, followed by the results of the data analysis. The data analyzing process is started with obtaining information by Weka, then the data is modified to visualize it in Tableau.

4.1 Cleaning process

The raw data showed quite some impurities, mainly due to people answering the questions in their own words. They are translated if the answer was unambiguous, in other cases, it is translated to Others.

Three of the entries were deleted, two due to people said they do not work remotely at all and one because the answer were not realistic. In the questionnaire a mistake was made in selecting the age groups, overlapping ages gave people difficulties filling it out, which made them type their real age. These are translated to the right groups and a group (60+) was added.

A specific list of the data modified can be requested.

4.2 Data Analysis

4.2.1 Weka

In the *preprocess* step of Weka, two filters are used. One to create a test and training set, with a 10% test set. The other filter to replace missing values. Some fields are not filled out by the candidates. Empty field are hard to process by Weka, so they are replaced by an unrelated value. Two parts of Weka are used to obtain more information about the questionnaire data. The *Select Attributes* and *Cluster*. In case of the first, a RankerClass in combination with InfoGainAttributeEval is used. A RankerClass ranks attributes by their individual evaluation and InfoGainAttributeEval evaluates the worth of an attributes by measuring the info gain with respect to the class (of Waikato, 2017).

Providing that the highest influence was found by the following five attributes; Country raised, Currently living in, Age, Department working, and Hours working. These findings are found similar for all questions, the average of influence was found different, but with a neglectable deviation of each other. After these five attributes the average of contributing strongly decreased and the contribution is obtained to be low.

The next step is the creation of clusters. Clustering allows it to make groups of data to determine patterns form the data. In this case it is a more suitable choice then Classification because Clustering takes every attribute in the data set and will be used to analyze the data, which does not happen in the case of Classification. A Cluster sorts to specific groups and the conclusions are based on the trends (Abernethy, 2010). In this case the clusters are formed based on the SimpleKMeans option.

This dataset is found to be best evaluated by the creation of three clusters. Which was found most applicable based on distribution and the sum of the squared errors. It is displayed in figure 1. The keywords can be found in the Appendix A and A.

Seeing that the differences between the clusters are relatively small. Although, in the *Zero* cluster is seen that when people work 30 to 40 hours instead of 40 to 50 tend to agree in a higher level to the question related to promotion opportunities. Taking a look to the first clusters learn us that females who are in a relation and living a nomadic life tend to disagree higher to question if they currently work long hours because the job demands it. Obtained from the last cluster, that when people are working in smaller companies, with less then 25 employees and of them less then 50% work remotely, the answer to the question if it is difficult to switch of work because they work remote more neutral.

Category	Question	Cluster Zero	Cluster One	Cluster Two
Demographic	Age	30-40	30-40	30-40
	Gender	Male	Female	Male
	Relation	Maried	In a relation	Maried
	Childeren	No	No	No
	Average Working Hours	30-40	40-50	40-50
	%Remote	Fully Remote	Fully Remote	Fully Remote
	Digital Nomad	No	Yes	No
	Country Raised	United States	United States	United States
	Country Living	United States	United States	United States
	Department	IT	IT	IT
	Company?	Company	Company	Company
	Size company	50-250	50-250	Less then 25
	Remote Collegues	Fully Remote	Fully Remote	Less then 50%
	Timezones	Yes	Yes	Yes
Job	Contents and work	5.487	5.2963	4.7821
	Satisfaction			
Satisfaction	Promotion	3.4087	3.679	3.7692
	Supervision	5.3826	5.0494	4.2949
	Payment	5.0087	4.9012	4.5897
	Remote Main Reason	4.3913	4.6049	3.8974
	Culture	4.0609	3.9136	3.9744
Work-Life balance	Satisfied	5.113	4.7531	4.0769
	Long Hours	2.5478	3.7037	3.3462
	Social Activities	2.3739	2.7778	3.3333
	Always Online	1.9739	2.716	2.8718
	Difficult Switch Remote	2.3913	3.2346	3.6795
	Easy Remote	4.7478	4.3086	3.7179
	Cuture	3.8261	3.8519	3.7308

Figure 1: The three clusters created by Weka

4.2.2 Tableau

Demographic data

The first step in the visualization phase is to visualize the demographic data. The most essential graphs are shown in figures 2a and 2b, others can be found in Appendix C.

It is obvious that the percentage of males who filled out the survey of is much higher then female. Additionally found that the age group 30 to 40 years is a much larger number then other age groups. Another finding is that for most people who filled out the survey the main reason to work remote is because they enjoy the freedom to work when or where to work. The other possible reasons are selected in a much smaller degree.

By far most of the candidates were raised and do live in the United States. The rest of the candidates are all living around the world and almost every continent is represented.

The majority of this group is married or in a relation. There is just a percentage of 20% which is found single. On the other hand, the majority of people does not have children. Only 20% of the people says they have children.

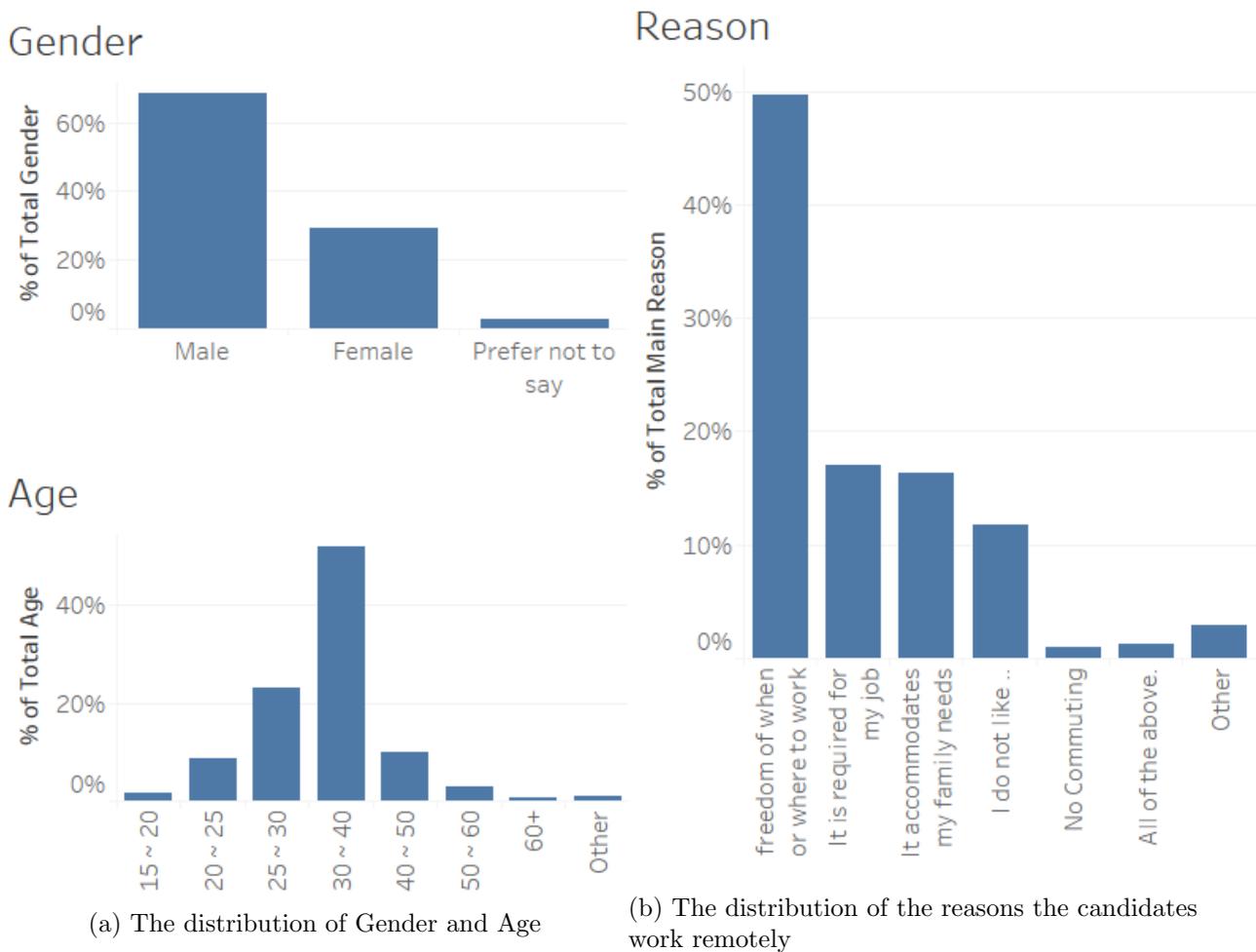


Figure 2

Of the group, a little over 30 % calls their selves a digital nomad.

Furthermore most of them work about 40 to 50 hours a week, and 77% of them works fully remote. Just 11% works more then half of their time remote and the same amount of people works less of the 50% remote.

Further it is found that more then 80% works for a company in which most of them work for a company with between 50 to 250 employees. Most of the candidates work in the IT department, but there is a wide variety in type of jobs the other preform. Of the people working for a company, a little less then 40% work in a fully remote company. The others are in the same percentages divided working for a company where less or more then 50% of their colleagues work remote.

Job satisfaction and work-life balance data

The second step in the visualization process, is to visualize the answers filled out on the Likert scale concerning the questions relates to job satisfaction and work-life balance. This process is structured based on the findings in the white paper of Wexler(2016). The overall results are shown in figure 3.

The questions are divided based on the categories they belong to. The numbers in the gray circles represent the average number of all the 306 candidates. The overall finding of the questionnaire is they seem to quite share the same opinions about the questions. Every demographic part is plotted in combination with figure 3. Questions which deviate more then 0.5 from the standard average are selected to be notable. The findings of this will be discussed below.

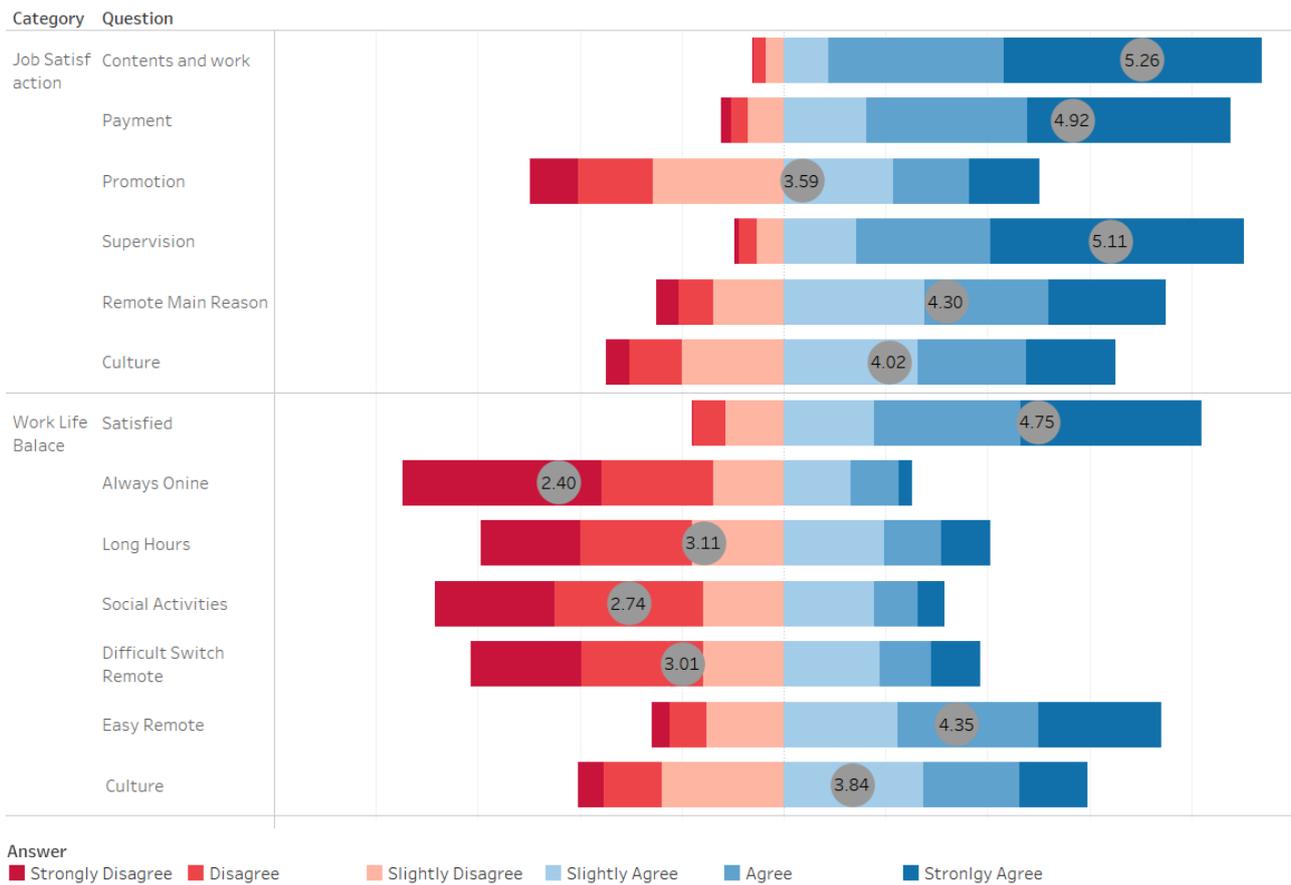


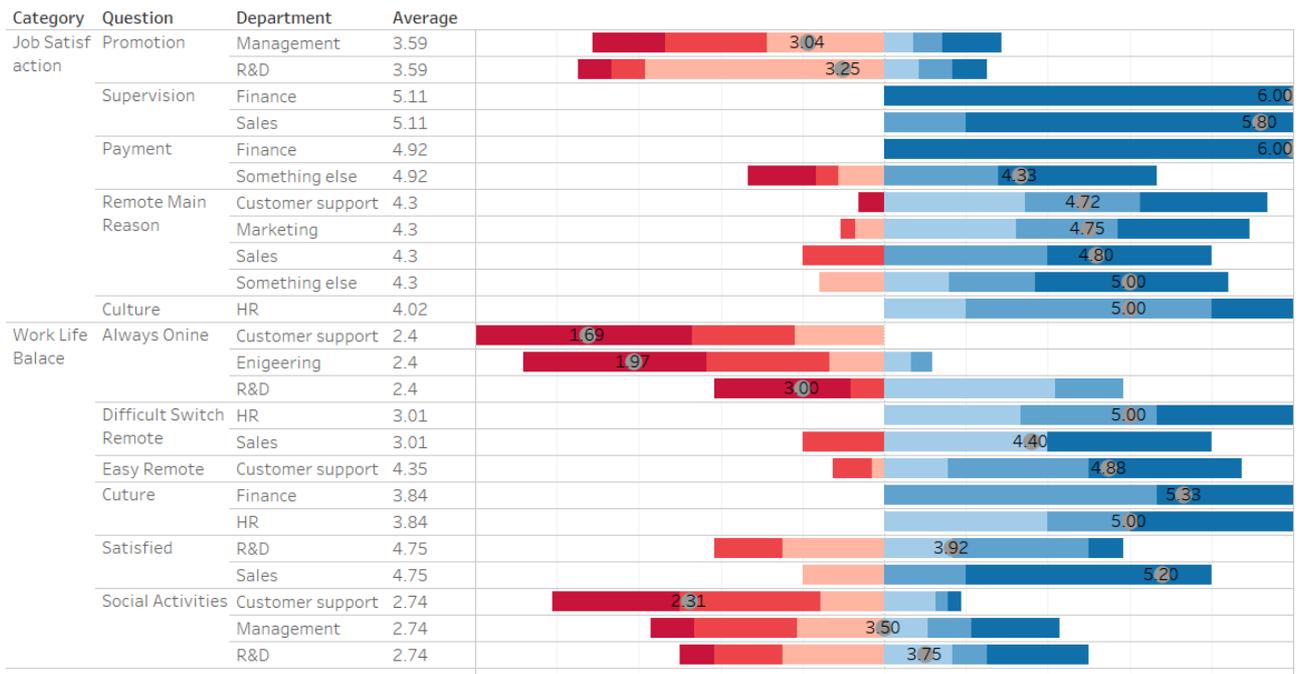
Figure 3: The results to the questions Job Satisfaction and Work-life balance

Overall everyone is really happy with the type and content of their work, payment, supervision. The options to promotion could be better according to a larger group. The question related to culture, and the relation remote working to job satisfaction is answered by candidates as slightly disagree.

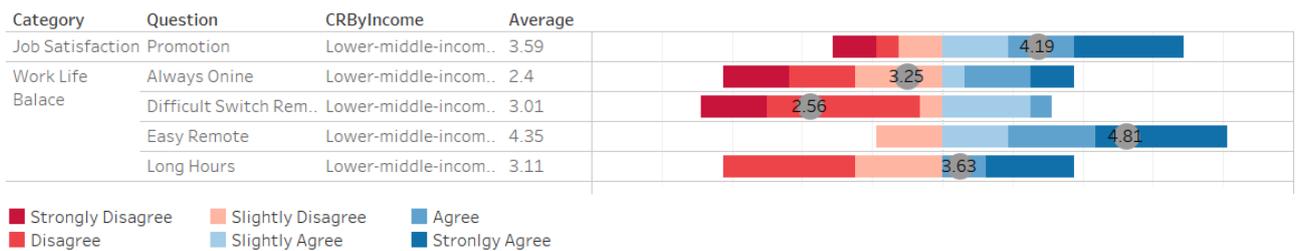
When taking a look to the questions related to work-life balance everyone seems to agree on the topics being satisfied with their work-life balance and that it is easier to obtain a good work-life balance when working remotely. Most of them agree on the fact that they disagree with the questions, having the feeling of always being on-line, working long hours, not having enough time to participate in social activities, and that it is difficult to switch off their work because they are working remotely.

Being able to conclude from the geographical data is converted to geographical regions and grouped by income. This according to the guidelines Bank(2017). It was found that the country data is not sufficient enough to geographical regions. Grouping by income results in acceptable groups. For this reason only the latter is used in this research.

Department



Country Raised Sorted by Income



■ Strongly Disagree ■ Slightly Disagree ■ Agree
■ Disagree ■ Slightly Agree ■ Strongly Agree

Figure 4: The exceptions of the department and current country sorted by income data

Based on the distribution on demographic categories the exceptions are visualized. A deviation of more than 0.5 is likely to result in a different Likert group. Seeing that, there are obtained as notable and seen as an exception. The most striking exceptions are shown in figure 4 and 5. In appendix A all the exceptions are visualized.

It is found that in the demographic categories, relation and timezone, are only some small deviation and neglectable from average. In the distribution of digital nomads or non digital nomads, it is found for digital nomads that the main reason why they are satisfied with their job mainly depends on the remote part. This is higher than for non digital nomads. In the questions according if they are working for a company, the freelancers tend to answer some questions differently. People working in companies larger than 250, do answer some questions differently as well. People working in companies with less than 50% of their colleagues working remotely, do answer differently to some questions as well. So do also people who are not working fully remote. Some groups when dividing on the hours they work, become too small to obtain a decent answer. This same problem is found for some age groups. There is also a difference found in opinion when someone is raised in lower-middle income countries. A more detailed visualization is found in Appendix A.

Reason work remote

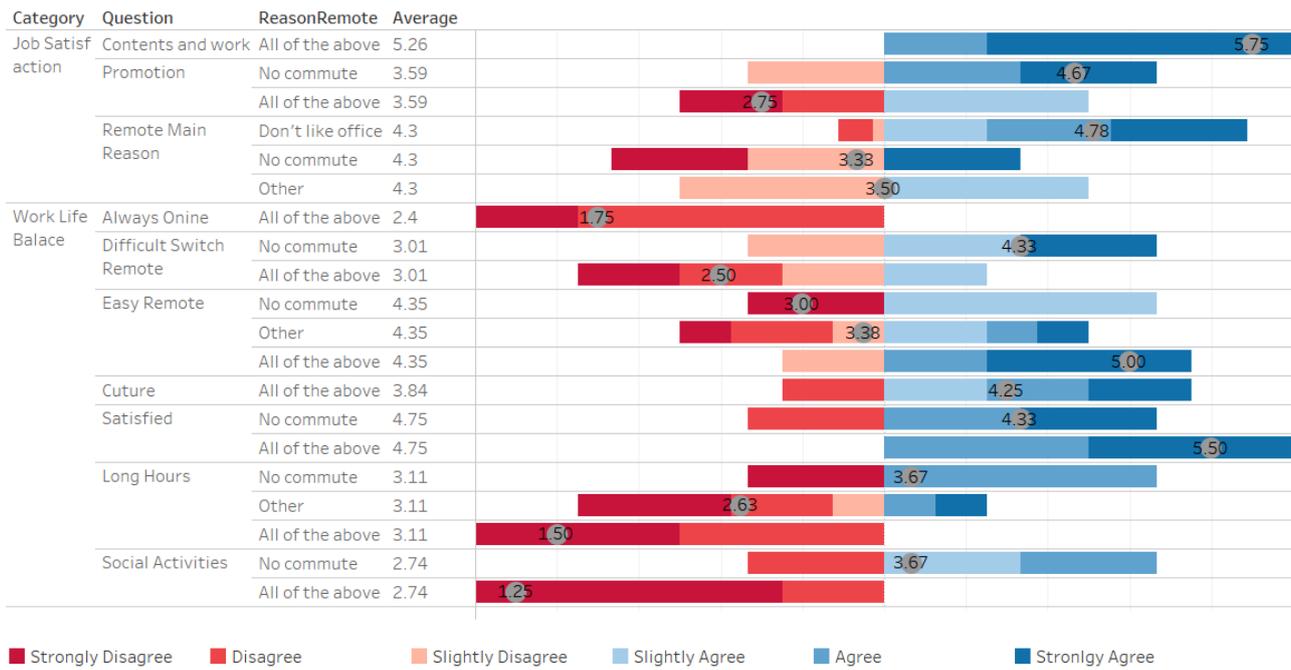


Figure 5: The exceptions of the reason why working remotely data

5 Results Interview

At the end of the questionnaire, a question was added, if someone was willing to give an interview. This question was answered yes, by 84 people. Because in the time frame it was not possible to interview all the 84 people, a selection was made. In total a number 10 interviews were carried out. Unfortunately, not everyone who answered with yes, was able to be interviewed when they were approached. An attempt was made to keep the same demographic distribution as was found by the questionnaire. The findings are grouped by category and research question.

5.1 Job satisfaction

RQ1: What are perceived to be the main influencing factors for the high levels of job satisfaction by remote workers?

The same overall impression was perceived during the interviews as was found in former research (Stevens, 2017). Everyone indicates to be really happy with all different parts of their life and job. Working remotely is for 9 of them also a major part of why they are satisfied with their job. Many of them indicate, they even would have loved their jobs, even if the remote part is the only part they really like about the job. Most of the interviewees indicate that a high contribution to their job satisfaction is caused by the way the company treats them. They feel they are really part of the company and contribute to this company. All of them felt that the company really invests in them as employees. They all found a high level of trust and respect. None of them wanted to leave the company they are working for and they found low employee turnover rates in their companies. Most of them describe it as that they have found the best fitting company. Some referred to the hiring process as being important in this.

When working fully remote, it is found that employees get a high degree of independence and autonomy, which is highly appreciated. The content of the job is also found highly important and contributes to the job satisfaction.

Being able to control and structure your own day is found to be important to everyone. One of the interviewees described it striking:

“Choose what you want, whenever you want”

The freedom that comes along with remote working contributes for everyone to the job satisfaction. Although not everyone consciously decided to start working remotely, and most of them had a high degree of challenges to tackle, it does now contribute. When was asked if they believe it works for everyone this way, that all are sure the answer is no. One of the interviewees said the following about this:

“Some people are made for a certain framework, other need more flexibility and freedom. Based on their personality. Everyone will figure out where that are in this spectrum. You are not able to push them in a certain way.”

Another interviewee described in more personal characteristics which highly contribute in someone being more suitable for remote working than another person. This interviewee described that he is kind of a loner, in a way that he likes people but loves to work alone. Being highly self-disciplined is a characteristic which contributes as well. This interviewee also mentioned that it is maybe less suitable for outgoing persons and people who love people. This is supported by findings in the *The Ultimate guide to remote work* Foster (2015) and many public blogs (Johansson (2017)). Foster describes that people who are self-disciplined, are able to prioritize, is a good written communicator, trustworthy, and has people around them are the most suitable for fully remote jobs.

A more striking finding was found that many of them described that not only the colleagues are important, but also that working with smart people contributed highly to their satisfaction.

According to literature (Lund, 2003) it was expected that promotion opportunities and supervision are important to employees in their job satisfaction. The opposite is found in the interviews. Most of them indicate that there are hardly any promotion opportunities but they do not mind about it. Because the job they currently fulfill is the one they love to do. When asked according to supervision, most say that they talk to their manager about the job and that there are many opportunities to learn but there is not a lot of supervision. It depends on the person you are, and the level you require it, and they all like that attitude.

5.2 Work-life balance

RQ2: What is the perceived influence of remote work on ones work-life balance?

Work-life balance is for sure a subject which engage remote workers. All of the interviewees directly were able to answer all the questions according to this question. They had asked themselves already similar question, even though the interview questions were not send to them in advance. All of them spoke really passionate about this topic and not explained that not only they were engaging in the process of getting the right balance between work and life but that the company they are working for tried to invest in this as much as possible. This made this topic easier to discuss. Everyone was open minded and happy to share their thoughts about work-life balance.

All of them had the similar interpretation of what a work-life balance means to them. Some described it as being able to stay away from work and others as being able schedule your own work. But for all of them, finding the right balance between the hours they work and the time they spend on other life components. Everyone told me that is essential for them find or have the right balance. They all described it as a challenge, but all are working pro-active on it to find the optimal balance.

For all of them the engagement of the company is really important. The fact that they do not request extreme working hours and offer enough vacation days is an important factor. But also communicating the goals clearly contributes. Most of the companies pay sport or other activities they want to do in their leisure time. If they wanted to follow a course or extra schooling it was expected to do that during working hours. All these factors highly influenced the work-life balance of the interviewees.

Most of the interviewees said that creating a schedule every week helps them a lot. This is supported in the *The Ultimate guide to remote work* Foster (2015).

“The best thing I did for myself in adapting to remote work has been to create morning and evening routines.”

- Courtney Seiter, *Buffer*

When asked which they feel as the influence of remote working on this, some answered with it enables me to realize the best balance, other answered with, it has pros and cons. The latter was found by most of them, some described it as pros and cons, others as challenges. Although, everyone really liked it and did not see it as a negative side. Easier on the side of being able to plan everything yourselves, being able to sport in the lunch break if you want to, or do your laundry while working. On the other hand, it is easy to get sloppy and start working again because your are that close to your *office*.

Everyone said, that they were still struggling or that it took some years to find the balance. Most of them said it takes some extra efforts to get your work and life balanced out when working remotely, but when the balance is found, it is worth it and giving much more opportunities than when working from an office. They describe that after finding the balance, it is a better balance then achieved when they were working in an office.

During the interviews it was only possible to speak to one digital nomad. In other environments it was possible to speak to more digital nomads, to support the findings, a question was posted on several Facebook groups consisting of digital nomads. Many of them shared the same feeling. Living as a

digital nomad, which is mainly enabled by working remotely, is found different then working mainly from home. One of the interesting findings is when moving to a new country it takes about a month to settle in and find the new balance between work and life again. When moving more often, it will get a little easier, but the transition period is still there. The interviewee described is beautiful and simple:

“New country, New routine”

One of the interviewees mentioned an interesting finding, which was verified with the other interviewees. Everyone highly agreed on that. The interviewee mentioned that every remote worker he know, started working remote due to a reason. Some of them had family that needed extra care, or some did preform top sport. All of them have a different reason but wanted to work but are not able to preform the hours in an office or absolutely do not like an office. They have a specific reason why they started searching for a remote job. As a result of this, it made it possible to fulfill their needs next to their job, and still keep working. Which contributes to their happiness and satisfaction. Most interviewees did not mind if they have to give up a percentage of enjoyable parts of their job, because it still enables to fulfill other opportunities in life which means much more to them.

“People are focused and passionate about something, which brings them to remote work”

5.3 Cultural differences

RQ3: What are perceived to be the most essential differences in cultural perspectives on job satisfaction and work-life balance?

During the interviews it stands out that everyone has the feeling there are cultural differences in the team or company, but it is hard to explicitly explain what kind of differences they are experiencing. Most of them describe it as a feeling that it is there, just some are able to explain it in more detail or give some examples. The most striking differences mentioned are the differences in work ethic between Europa and the United States of America and the challenges of working with non-native and native English speakers.

To start with, two of the ten interviewees had the feeling that there are cultural backgrounds in their teams but due to the same mindset it did not felt as differences. They have a strict hiring process which only let specific and most suitable people through. Which results in a team which share same ideas about remote work, the product they make, and share the same values. Even though they all come from different countries. One of them described is beautifully:

“I believe that there are no cultural differences between cultures if you all share the same values.”

Unfortunately, not everyone one shared this feeling. Many of the others mentioned the different work ethic between the USA and the EU. This work ethic does also highly influence the perspective on someones job satisfaction and work-life balance. Many of them, even when they are from the USA themselves, describe Americans as workaholics. Americans are not used to taking many vacation days and are used to only 10 days a year. In the EU this is different, most of the European countries do have at least 25 vacation days. Next to that, Europeans are used to use all of these days by way of contrast Americans normally do not take the fully 10 days. Many highly appreciate the 40 hour work week while on the other hand Americans are more used to working extreme hours. One described it as, Americans are used to commute, work, commute, sleep, repeat. In many companies this causes challenges. If the differences between the Europeans and Americans are not understand well at both sides, it will cause misunderstanding. It is also found that the Europeans tend to work more because the Americans do that, even though they do not like doing it. Many of the interviewees mentioned that they try to solve it with an open-minded environment. When everyone talks about it, it contributes to the understanding of each other. Another important factor to minimize these differences which is mentioned to many of them again, is the high levels of trust and respect.

Furthermore the challenges of working with non-native and native English speakers. Mainly the native English speakers mentioned this challenge. It is easy to misunderstand a joke, when a language is not your native language. But the different level of English also increase the challenges in understanding each other cultures. Some mentioned that, speaking English casually about your thoughts is more difficult then talking about a work discipline you are used to talk about. Again, the open minded environment is mentioned many times to solve these challenges.

6 Discussion

This research is explorative study focused on the themes job satisfaction and work-life balance in the context of remote work. The information is collected form three different sources: nonscientific and scientific literature, a questionnaire, and in-depth interviews. In this section all the findings will be merged and discussed based on the research questions. A validation of the collected data can be found in the chapter 8, validity.

6.1 Job satisfaction

RQ1: What are perceived to be the main influencing factors for the high levels of job satisfaction by remote workers?

Remote offices are becoming increasingly popular (TINYPulse, 2016). Different scientific studies showed that flexible workers had higher levels of overall job satisfaction (Hill 1998; Hyman & Summers 2004; Igarria & Guimaraes 1999) and organizational commitment (Grover & Crooker 1995; Roehling et al. 2001) than their counterparts who did not work flexibly(Almer & Kaplan 2002; Thomas & Ganster 1995) (Kossek et al., 2010). Which is confirmed by TINYPulse (2016), which found that employees working for fully remote companies have notably higher job satisfaction than those who are not allowed to work remote. Remote workers give on average a 8.1 on the happiness scale (with 10 being the highest) while office workers give it a 7.4 (TINYPulse, 2016). 48% of the remote workers are more likely to rate their job a 10 on the happiness scale (Bothun et al., 2016). After findings of TINYPulse (2016), Bothun et al. (2016), and former research (Stevens, 2017) it is concluded that remote workers are happier at work, feel more valued, and are more satisfied with their job. A direct influence of remote work on job satisfaction is found in scientific literature (Hill 1998; Hyman & Summers 2004; Igarria & Guimaraes 1999), but the influencing factors on job satisfactions are not discussed in scientific literature before. During this research, the main influencing factors for remote workers on their job satisfaction are explored. In figure 6, a visualization of the influencing factors is given.

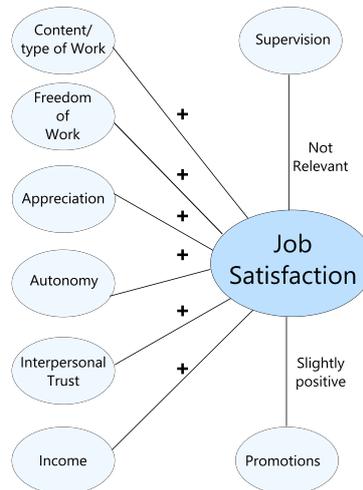


Figure 6: Main influencing factors on the job satisfaction of remote workers

During this research the following question was asked in the questionnaire; *Being able to work remote, is the main reason I am satisfied with my job.* The question was answered with a 4.3 out of 6 on a Likert scale (Likert, 1932). This indicates that the remote part of the job does contribute strongly to the job satisfaction. Freelancers, digital nomads, people who don't like an office, and people working in the departments customer support, marketing, and sales have even an higher level of agreement

to this question. But they are not the only ones, people currently living in a lower-to-middle income country or upper-to-middle income country show also a higher agreement on this question.

The majority of freelancers and digital nomads choose deliberately to work remotely. Which contributes to the high agreement of remote work being part of the job satisfaction. This group of people deliberately have chosen to work remotely and the correlation to their job satisfaction seems quite obvious. Even though, this has never been confirmed in scientific literature.

During the interviews there is a strong agreement to this topic. For all of them, remote work is the major part of their job satisfaction. The majority indicates that they even would have loved their jobs, even if the remote part is the only part they really like. The main topics are described in the following paragraphs and are visualized in figure 6.

6.1.1 Freedom of work

The reasons employees have for working remotely can vary widely. The most popular one given was that they enjoy having the freedom of choosing when and where to work (41%). Others cited family needs and a dislike of working in an office. A sizable group (22%) work remotely because their job requires them to (TINY Pulse, 2016). This is confirmed during this research. The question, *What is the main reason you work remotely*, is by half of the employees answered with having the freedom of choosing when and where to work. Until now, freedom of work, was correlated to job satisfaction in scientific literature (Goetz et al., 2012). But there no relation confirmed in scientific literature between freedom of work for remote workers and their job satisfaction. The impact is substantial and called by the majority of remote workers as an essential part of their job satisfaction.

Not only flexibility contributes to job satisfaction, it can also shore up productivity. When the Chinese travel website *Ctrip* gave its call center staff the opportunity to work from home for nine months, it found that those who worked from home completed 13.5% more calls than the in-office staff did and quit at half the rate of people in the office ultimately saving Ctrip an estimated 1,900 per employee over the nine-month period (Bothun et al., 2016). If the remote workers are asked: 91% assert that they get more work done outside of the office (TINY Pulse, 2016). This is confirmed during the interviews of this research. When asked, all of the interviewees agreed to be more productive outside the office. So it can be concluded that remote workers appear to be more productive.

Having said that, it should be considered carefully what kind of remote work arrangements are introduced in an organization. It is safe to say that flexibility is important and that includes the flexibility to not work remotely. Forcing the issue could leave employees feeling unappreciated and even increase your companys turnover risk (TINY Pulse, 2016). Which is also mentioned many times during the interviews. For one who love to work remotely, it can positively influence their job satisfaction, but for one who do not likes this, it can negatively influence it. Which can be an interesting field of research.

6.1.2 Autonomy

Bothun et al. (2016), describe the power of autonomy in their white paper. Autonomy in the work place influence many different aspects for employees. Autonomy was not included in the questionnaire of this research. During the interviews everyone described the importance of autonomy. Which for them contributed highly to their job satisfaction. Similar findings are found in scientific literature (Trow, 1957). Although it is confirmed in scientific literature that there is a positive relation between autonomy and job satisfaction, for remote workers an addition can be made. Remote workers seem to have a higher level of autonomy which makes the positive contribution probably even more.

This autonomy also contributes to a remote worker's schedule. The happiest employees, it turns out, are those who typically work every day of the week. In contrast, those who have more standard-length workdays but not the usual set of days report some of the lowest levels of happiness (TINY Pulse, 2016).

During this research, no specific attention is paid to when they work, but during the interviews it is obtained that creating your own schedule is found to be extremely important. For the majority of the interviewees it did have a great impact on their work-life balance and indirectly on their job satisfaction. This is discussed in more detail in chapter 6.2.

Another interesting finding is the discrepancy in job satisfaction between older and younger workers is rooted in the nature of the work they do (Bothun et al., 2016). 43% of Baby Boomers (born between 1945 and 1965) are business owners, while only 13% of Millennials (born between 1977 and 1994) are. Just 1% of Gen Z-ers (born between 1995 and 2012) are business owners. So while many Baby Boomers enjoy the autonomy to set their own hours and make meaningful decisions, few in younger generations share those privileges. For example, while 58% of workers under the age of 35 say they are allowed to work from home only occasionally or not at all, 60% of Baby Boomers have the authority to work from home one day a week or more (Bothun et al., 2016). So it sounds like it, that every generation is searching for the comparable level of autonomy. Unfortunately, the age group of Baby Boomers is too small to draw conclusions during this research.

6.1.3 Appreciation

Bothun et al. (2016), described not only autonomy but also appreciation as a substantial influencing factor on the current and future work force. This topic is not included in the questionnaire because it was not suspected to contribute in such a high degree. During the interviews it was clear, this expectation was unfounded. The majority of the interviewees indicated that one of the major reasons for being satisfied in their job is due to way the company treats them. Zeb et al. (2014), appoints in his study that there is a significant relationship between employees job satisfaction and reward and recognition. Rewarding or recognizing certain desirable behaviors of an employee can lead to job satisfaction and better performance is the logical consequence of it. In this regard it suggests that organizations can achieve their goals and aims through motivated employees and effective reward and recognition system. The study further underscores that appreciations, encouragement, positive feedback, promotions, respect and recognition play an important role in enhancing employees job satisfaction (Zeb et al., 2014). Although it is not specifically correlated before to remote workers in scientific research, the appreciation is highly important to them and contributed to their job satisfaction.

During the interviews, the majority explains that they sincerely care about the company and they have the feeling mutual. None of them wanted to leave the company they are currently working for. Which is surprisingly after the findings of Bothun et al. (2016), saying about 33% of the workforce expects to be at a different job in the next six months. Everyone in the interviews mentioned a very low employee turnover rate, which they all appreciated and did not want to change jobs themselves. This research only concludes that this is a striking difference, the reason why this difference is there could be related to feeling highly appreciated and could be explored in future research.

6.1.4 Interpersonal Trust

In scientific literature is found that successful teamwork is built on a foundation of trust (Measom, 2017). It is found that there are two factors that influence building a trustful relation in distributed teams: diverse location and electronic communication. The development of trust is correlated to the different phases of teams (Greenberg et al., 2007). Higher levels of trust and respect are related to higher levels of job satisfaction (Zeb et al., 2014). Although it is not directly related to remote workers, it is assumed the influence of trust and respect on job satisfaction are even higher under this group.

This is confirmed during a former study (Stevens, 2017) and also confirmed during this research. Interviewees mentioned that the high levels of interpersonal trust and respect are important to their jobs, this influences their job satisfaction.

6.1.5 Content/type of work

Lund (2003), mentioned in his study that content or the type of work is an influencing factor on job satisfaction. In this research it is tested if this also holds for remote workers. The question *I am satisfied with the contents and work required of me in my job*, is answered extremely high in the survey with a 5.26 out of 6 on a Likert scale (Likert, 1932). This question is answered comparable for all kind of different demographic backgrounds. Only three exceptions were found, people working in a company with more then 250 people and people whom are working in a company where less then 50% of their colleagues work remotely tend to agree less to this question. People answering to what is the main reason you work remotely with; I don't like an office, it accommodates my family needs, I enjoy the freedom of choosing when or where to work, no commuting, and it is required for my job. They are above average satisfied with the content of their jobs.

In the interviews no direct questions is asked about this topic. Most of them indirectly answered the question while asking other questions. The overall feeling was clear to understand that the interviewees where extremely happy with their jobs and the content of their jobs. They all spoke passionate about what they are doing on daily basis. It can be concluded that the content or the type of work also influences the job satisfaction for remote workers.

6.1.6 Income

TINYPulse (2016), also took a look to the role salary plays to employees. Its easier to assume that the more a person is paid, the happier that they will be. But Forbes points out that employees reach a point of diminishing returns, specifically when salaries surpass \$USD 75,000, where earning more money does not give a significant boost to happiness. Interestingly, remote workers tend to be in someway matched up to that assertion. The happiest remote employees are those who earn between \$USD 75,000 and \$USD 99,000 (slightly higher than Forbess cut-ff point). And in fact, happiness decreases slightly at salaries beyond that. This does not mean adding a salary cap at \$USD 100,000 will guarantee employee happiness, of course. Just that it is important to be aware that money can not be used as a silver bullet for job satisfaction.

During this research an overall agreement on the payment was found. There are some exceptions. People working as freelancers or working in the financial sector are above average satisfied with their payment. People working less then 50% remote and people living currently in lower-to-middle income countries tend to be slightly less satisfied with their payments. The last one is surprisingly, and not found decent substantiation for. This should be researched in further research.

In the interviews it is obvious that everyone is not only satisfied with their income but also with the fringe benefits. For example, health insurance, vacation days, payments for phone, laptop and home office, payment of their sports or co-working spaces, and so on. Which is highly appreciated. Artz (2010) examined the relationship between fringe benefit and job satisfaction. A positive relation fridge benefits and job satisfaction is found. Which seems to be the same for remote workers.

Some of the interviewees also point to the fact that they have chosen this company based on the fact that these companies normally pay higher salaries. In literature is found that financial benefits play an important role in enhancing employees job satisfaction (Haider et al., 2015). Which can also be related to remote workers, because they tend to be extremely happy with their financial situation, which contribute to their job satisfaction.

6.1.7 Promotions

Lund (2003) found in his study that promotion opportunities are important to employees contributing to their job satisfaction. A question about this topic was asked in the questionnaire. Surprisingly, it is answered with overall disagreement. Although some exceptions were found. People who are raised

in a lower-to-middle income country or work remotely because they do not like high commuting times agree higher on their promotion opportunities. Although both of these groups are really small. People working in management or research and development, see their promotion opportunities even worse. People for whom the main reason to work remotely is; I don't like an office, it accommodates my family needs, I enjoy the freedom of choosing when or where to work, no commuting, and it is required for my job also see less promotion opportunities.

During the interviews was searched for a reason behind this disagreement. The finding was even more surprisingly then the finding in the questionnaire. All the interviewees indicate that they hardly have promotion opportunities but they do not mind about it. The job they currently fulfill is the one they love to do. Even though there are not that many promotion opportunities it does not contribute negatively to their job satisfaction, because they are happy with the job they are currently fulfilling. This is contrary the findings in scientific literature (Lund, 2003) for corporate organizations.

Actually the findings of Lund are from 2003, much has changed in this field since then. Workers now migrate from job to job over their career in search of greater fulfillment and compensation (Doyle, 2017). Changing jobs every couple of years used to look bad on a resume. That stigma is fast becoming antiquated. This sentiment is different than the belief of past generations that you cling to an employer over a lifetime. The current workers who often migrate from job to job are believed to have a higher learning curve, be higher performers, and even to be more loyal(Giang, 2016). A trend of the last years which is not confirmed by scientific literature. This probably is also one of the reason remote workers do not mind about having less promotion opportunities. Promotion opportunities are often searched outside of the current employer(Doyle, 2017). An interesting field to explore for scientific literature.

6.1.8 Supervision

TINYPulse (2016) asks how often remote employees wanted contact with their supervisor, the most popular choice was a weekly frequency. The vast majority of respondents are happy with the way their supervisor gives them feedback on their performance. What these responses indicate is that it is not necessarily a matter of how or even when, effective management and feedback can happen even in ways that we do not typically expect to see. Many of the remote workers love their freedom and so called micromanagement can crush their engagement(TINYPulse, 2016).

According to scientific literature (Lund, 2003) it was expected that supervision is important to employees in their job satisfaction. In the questionnaire they answered with high agreement (5.11). People working in companies larger then 250 employees or working less then 50% of their time remote do agree less on their satisfaction according to supervision. People working in finance and and sales are even more highly satisfied then average.

When asked according to supervision in the interviews, most say that they talk to their manager about the job and that there are many opportunities to learn but there is not a lot of supervision. It depends on the person you are, and the level you require it, and they all like that attitude. So they do find a positive correlation between their supervision and jobs satisfaction, but is found less important for most of them then stated in scientific literature (Lund, 2003). Is does more agrees with the findings of TINYPulse (2016). They are satisfied with their supervision but do not need high amount of contact with their supervisor to achieve this.

6.2 Work-life balance

RQ2: What is the perceived influence of remote work on one's work-life balance?

Hill et al. (2003), studied the variation of different work environments. They found that the perception of virtual office workers was that telework had a neutral influence on work-life balance. However, virtual office workers reported significantly less work-life balance and less personal-family success than traditional office workers or home office workers. In which home office workers are explained are workers who practice an intense form of home-based telecommuting where the home is the primary work venue. One possible reason is the lack of externally imposed physical boundaries. Virtual office workers may have difficulty knowing when they are at work and when they are home. Virtual office workers have the authority to work wherever it makes sense to accomplish business objectives. Another explanation is that giving virtual office employees work-enabling tools may increase their time density or ability to do multiple disparate things at the same time (Robinson & Godbey, 1997). This also may negatively impact virtual office workers view of work-life balance.

On the other hand, Hill et al. (2003) found in the same study that working primarily from the home office was linked to more positive perceptions of work-life balance and greater perception of personal-family success. The scientific literature indicates that possible benefits of successful work-life balance include less marital conflict, better monitoring of children, less depression, etc. (Beatty, 1996; Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989; Bumpus, Crouter, & McHale, 1999; Crouter, Perry-Jenkins, Huston, & Crawford, 1989). By working from home, employees have more flexibility in when their work is done. Employees with perceived job flexibility are able to work longer hours before workload negatively impacts their work-family balance (Hill et al., 2001).

During this study two interesting issues were found. First, the majority is happy with work-life balance even though it comes along with quite some challenges. Second, Work-life balance is an important and often discussed topic under remote workers.

6.2.1 Satisfied and challenging

According to Kurland & Bailey (1999), employees working in a virtual office have more difficulty with work-life balance than traditional office workers.

During the interviews it is found that the majority of interviewees does have mixed feeling about their work-life balance when it is related to remote working. They mentioned they are satisfied with their work-life balance, but that remote working makes it more challenging. The interviewees mainly describe it as the challenges of remote working. Despite the challenge, everyone mentioned they like the challenge and are working hard to tackle it. One of the interviewees said, a new job never comes without challenges, and this is a challenge for me. Examples of challenges mentioned are the fact that it is easier because you are able to schedule your own time, do the laundry in your lunch break or start your days in the afternoon if you prefer. On the other hand, your work is always there. It is easy to start working again, there is always work what needs to be done or someone calling for your help.

The influence of remote working on one's work-life balance is also examined in the questionnaire by the questions; *It is difficult to switch of my work, because I work remotely* and *For me it is easy to maintain a good work-life balance because I work remote*. The first question is answered with an overall disagreement (3.01). Although on average there is disagreement, the answers are divided. The difficulty to switch off from work because of remote work is found to be more difficult for people working in human research and sales. People who work remote because of the commuting times, share the same feeling. The second question, for me it is easy to maintain a good work-life balance because I work remote, is answered with an overall agreement. There is only a small number of people who disagree to this statement. Maintaining a good work-life balance due to remote working, is found to be even easier by people who see every reason as a reason to work remotely and people working

in customer support. People who work remote only 50% of their time or work remotely to decrease commuting time disagree highly to this question.

In the questionnaire information is also gained about the feeling of the candidates if they currently work long hours, if it is expected to be always on-line and if they still have time to spend on leisure activities. All these three questions are answered with a strong disagreement. Although some groups share a slightly different opinion. Freelancers agree more on the feeling if they are working long hours and being always on-line. Digital nomads on the other hand disagree strongly on the question if they find difficulties in spending time on social activities.

The finding of Kurland & Bailey (1999) is confirmed to the fact that remote workers find difficulties in finding balance between work and life. However, remote workers tend to see this as a challenge and not as a downside of remote working. The latter is never confirmed before in scientific literature.

6.2.2 Importance of Work-life balance

During the interviews it stands out that work-life balance is found to be an important topic under remote workers. All the interviewees had a clear and direct answer to all the questions related to work-life balance. All of them are highly engaged to this subject and proactively trying to improve their balances.

The questionnaire showed the same findings, remote workers rate their satisfaction of their work-life balance with an 4.75 out of 6 on a Likert scale (Likert, 1932). There are also some exceptions found to this. People working in R&D and people which started working remotely because they wanted to spend less time on their commuting, are less satisfied with their work-life balance. On the other hand, people are even more satisfied when working in sales or for whom the main reason to work remotely is; I don't like an office, it accommodates my family needs, I enjoy the freedom of choosing when or where to work, no commuting, and it is required for my job.

These findings are in some way contradicting with the scientific findings by Hill et al.. They found that virtual office workers reported significantly less work-life balance but in the same study that working primarily from the home office was linked to more positive perceptions of work-life balance. Fully remote employees, which are studied in this research, are mostly both. Working from home office but also in a virtual office. There are no scientific documents specific on the relation between work-life balance and remote workers. It can be concluded that for remote workers, work-life balance is an important topic and highly valued. Overall they seem to be satisfied with their balance between work and life.

It should be mentioned that remote working is not highly satisfying for everyone and only remote workers are asked in this research. As mentioned by TINYPulse(2016), it is safe to say that flexibility is important and that includes the flexibility to not work remotely. Forcing the issue could leave employees feeling unappreciated and even increase your company's turnover risk.

6.2.3 Influencing factors

It is believed that the influence of knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics(KSAOs) also highly contribute to maintaining the right work-life balance. It is found that skills concerning time- and self-management are particularly important, they are found to be pivotal for constructing work life balance in dispersed working contexts (Koehne et al., 2012). Motivation towards these challenges are found important (Spitzberg 2006; Venkatesh & Bala 2008; Magnusson et al. 2014; Hertel et al. 2005). In the interviews this is often mentioned as well. One of the interviewees described it clearly by the fact that you should be able to work alone and being highly self-disciplined. Which is supplemented by the findings of Foster (2015). Foster also mentions being able to prioritize, being a good written communicator and being trustworthy as important personal characteristics in being a remote worker.

As already is found, that time- and self-management are particularly important for constructing work-life balance while remote working. It is found that other KSAO's also influence the work-life balance highly, but also the ease to adapt and overcome challenges according to work-life balance.

For all the interviewees the engagement of the company into this topic is found to be really important. They mention that it highly contributes to the ease of finding the balance between work and life. If a company does not ask for long working hours and offer enough vacation days it contributes highly to their work-life balance. Also clear communication of goals and expectations are positively contributing. Many of the companies spoke openly about the work-life balance with their employees and try to help them with finding a balance as much as possible. For the majority of interviewees leisure activities were highly stimulated and paid for by the company. This engagement of a company is highly valued by the interviewees and seen as a positive influencing factor on their own work-life balance. Although this is not confirmed in scientific research before.

Another influencing factor, which is specific for one group, is traveling. Digital nomads tend to build different work-life balances than people working from a fixed location. During the interviews it was only possible to speak to one digital nomad. In different environments it was possible to speak to more digital nomads. To support the findings, questions were posted on several digital nomad Facebook groups. It is found that they mainly share the same feeling; working as a digital nomad is found different than working from a fixed location. When taking this according to work-life balance it is found that when changing country, a new balance should be found again every time. The time to find this balance depends on a person, but many say it takes them about a month. It is found to become easier but the transition period stays. Digital nomads, is a new research topic, which is not explored before (Mller, 2016).

6.3 Cultural differences

RQ3: What are perceived to be the most essential differences in cultural perspectives on job satisfaction and work-life balance?

Cultural diversity is a primary antecedent, along with geographical distribution, of distributed teams. Cultural identity causes differences in beliefs, expectations, basic assumptions, and behavior and these differences influence distributed teams (Scott & Wildman, 2015). The reactions to work and family demands differ among people across countries and continents at various levels of economic development (Chandra, 2012). These differences can also affect one's perspective on job satisfaction and work-life balance.

In the questionnaire two questions were included related to cultural differences. Asking if the candidates have the feeling that there are cultural differences according to the perspective on job satisfaction or work-life balance. Both were answered with slightly agreement, but the answers were divided. Feedback during the interviews gave the information that everyone had a different understanding of the questions. It can be concluded that the question was too ambiguous.

Research on virtual teams often considers the impact of national or cultural factors, but Gilson et al. (2015) posits that comparing the generational impact of members or subgroups may highlight some key differences (Gilson et al., 2015). Furthermore it is found that cross-cultural adaptations become more complex depending on the numerical proportion of team members from different national cultures and virtuality (Zhang et al., 2007).

During the interviews it stands out that the interviewees have the feeling that there are cultural differences in their team or company. But they all find it hard to explicitly name the differences they are experiencing. Most of them describe it as a feeling that there is a difference, just a few are able to explain it in more detail or give some examples. But also the few who are able to explain it in more detail find it difficult to relate cultural differences in job satisfaction or work-life balance.

A specific question according to cultural differences in relation to job satisfaction or work-life balance

is asked during the interviews. It was answered by two interviewees that they did not see any cultural differences when it comes to job satisfaction or work-life balance. The majority had a similar feeling, but found it hard to be sure about this. The two interviewees mentioned that when sharing the same values and ideas about remote working the product you are working on, and share the same work values there are not many differences left. Maybe there are differences culturally, but they believed that two people from the same culture could observe a bigger differences between them when they do not share the same values. Due to this same mindset, they do not have the feeling of differences in their team. This topic should be explored in more detail in further research because a conclusion can not be drawn based on two people.

The most striking differences remote workers seem to face is the differences in work ethic between Europa and the United States of America and the challenges of working with non-native and native English speakers. On the other hand, two out of the ten interviewees had the feeling that there are cultural backgrounds in their teams but due to the same mindset it did not felt as differences.

The major cultural differences are mentioned between the United States of America and Europe. The norms and values on work ethic between these countries is believed to be intense. The different view on work ethic, also results in a different view on job satisfaction and work-life balance. A high percentage of the interviewees mentioned, describe Americans as workaholics, even when they are from the USA themselves. American workers do have a different perspective on working hours and vacation days. In many companies this causes challenges. If the differences between the Europeans and Americans are not understand well at both sides, it will cause misunderstanding. Many of the interviewees mentioned that they try to solve it with an open-minded environment based on trust and respect.

This difference between the American and European work ethic is also confirmed by literature. Even though, the major influence on remote teams has not found before. An example of the difference between American and European work ethic found is a difference between Dutch people and Americans. For instance, in 2016, the Dutch worked an average of 1,430 hours a year, while American workers worked about 1,783 hours, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development(OECD, 2014). Meanwhile, U.S. workers, who receive about 15 days off per year, also get less vacation time than their European counterparts, who get about 25, according to a 2016 survey from Expedia (2015). Whats more, while American employees take about 73% of their allotted vacation time, German and French workers take nearly all of the vacation time theyre allowed (Close, 2017). Which is quite similar to the feelings of the interviewees.

Lauring & Selmer (2012) studied the impact of shared common language and variation in proficiency level of a language on co-located multicultural teams. (Lauring & Selmer, 2012) discovered that this does have an important impact on team cohesiveness, team effectiveness and knowledge sharing (Lauring & Selmer, 2012). This is also found for geographically dispersed multicultural teams, during this research. Although a direct relation between language proficiency and work-life balance is not found during this research, this finding is interesting.

Furthermore the challenges of working with a combination of non-native and native English speakers. Mainly the native English speakers mentioned this challenge. It is easy to misunderstand a joke, when a language is not your native language. But the different level of English also increase the challenges in understanding each other cultures. In global teams language commonality refers to the degree to which individuals share common understanding of the English language, including skill, e.g. proficiency in sounds of words, grammatical structures and conventions, and knowledge about using the language where applicable (Clment & Gardner, 2001). As English is often the common language of employees working in virtual teams, variations in proficiency and style of language use will often exist between group members (Klitmiller & Lauring, 2013).

It can be concluded that during this research there is not enough evidence to conclude if a difference is experienced in culture according to job satisfaction or work-life balance. A more in-depth study is needed. Although, it is found that remote workers tend to find cultural difference but find it difficult

to explain it detail. The major challenges for remote workers are not found in differences perspective on job satisfaction or work-life balance but more in language and difference in work ethic. The latter does influence the perspective on job satisfaction or work-life balance. Although the direct relation is not confirmed during this research and is an interesting field to explore in further research.

7 Implications for GoalGorilla and scientific research

During the time of this research, an internship is fulfilled at GoalGorilla. The goal of this internship was an explorative study to discover the opportunities to start hiring fully remote employees. To be able to give implications on this topic, directly to GoalGorilla, an internal survey within GoalGorilla and interviews with different employees and the CEO's have been preformed. Based on the findings the following implications are advised to GoalGorilla.

7.1 Implications for GoalGorilla

This research has been performed partially on behalf of GoalGorilla. Their goal is to research the opportunity to hire fully remote team members and find out the influence on job satisfaction and work-life balance. Based on an internal survey and interviews with employees and the CEO's, recommendation are developed. Furthermore, an infographic is created to inform the employees, this can be found in Appendix D.

- Is this really a next step?

During the interviews the main question which came up is: *Does GoalGorilla really want to make the step to work with fully remote colleagues?*. It was found that the opinions about this questions are divided. This deviation was also found by the CEO's. None of the current employees indicates that they want to work more then 50 percent of their time remote, which is already allowed. On the other hand, there are quite some employees whom foresee concerns when hiring fully remote employees. It is believed that setting a clear goal will be beneficial for GoalGorilla.

- Set up a clear plan

If GoalGorilla wants to start hiring fully remote employees or offer it to their current employees it is recommended to set up a clear plan to ensure a smooth process. When working fully remote it is crucial to get clear instruction and being involved in the company. This helps employees to fulfill their duties. In this step, attention should be paid to develop an educational plan for all the employees. Even though, they are already working in a distributed team, working with fully remote employees is another step.

- Investigate a business structure.

It is found that the current business structure does not allow for the hiring of foreign employees for fully remote positions. Based on the Dutch Law, it is not allowed to hire contractors as full time employees. A way which is often used as business structure to hire fully remote employees. Another option is to hire employees for fully remote positions on a contract. This option brings along insurance issues which are hard to overcome in the Netherlands.

After an interview with another Dutch company TRNDLabs, which had 50 percent of their employees on fully remote positions. They found the only easy solution to hire fully remote employees is setting up a sister company in another country, where it is allowed to hire full time contractors.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that GoalGorilla should first explore their business options before offering fully remote positions.

- Improve communication and invest in your team spirit.

Working with fully remote employees requests a different way of communication. For the employer and for the current employees. It is believed that the current communication process is not optimal when working with fully remote employees. To improve, extra education in ways of communication for the employees and employer is advised.

Another striking finding in the survey is, that a high amount of current employees is afraid to lose the current team spirit when working remotely. When starting to work with fully remote

employees, an solution should be found to this expectation. It is not uncommon that there are negative expectation to probable changes in an organization. This should be threatred with attention when changing the current structure. The team spirit is one of the strongest forces of GoalGorilla and this should be kept in mind when changing the current structure. It could be possible to turn in one of the negative sides of GoalGorilla when a "us versus them" mentality arises of the people working non-remotely and remotely.

7.2 Implications for business

The subjects, job satisfaction and work-life balance, seem to be important subjects to the business world. Remote working is topic which is explained in more detail in the non-scientific literature than in scientific literature. There are endless blogs explaining issues concerning remote work and quite some books describing different aspects of remote working. While reading many blogs it seems that blogs frequently only describe a specific subjects lacking in depth. On the other hand, are books, describing a broad variety of subjects with much more depth. The majority of books written about remote work are written by a fully remote company, which are not independent and often prejudiced. During this study a more independent research had been executed based on two specific subjects. This can be the first step for further scientific research in this topic. It is believed that this will highly contribute to knowledge about remote workers and fully remote companies.

During this research it is found, that the satisfaction of remote workers is high. An interesting finding which can highly influence the way companies are structured right now. It is clear that this way of working is not suitable for everyone, but for the people who do fit in, it is much satisfying than a conventional way of working. Giving your employees the opportunity to choose how they want to structure their work day and there way they work (remote or not remote) is believed to highly influence the health and happiness in your company. It is found during this study that freedom of work, autonomy and appreciation do highly contribute to employees their job satisfaction and indirectly influences many other topics. It can for example reduce employee turnover, sick-leave, overall happiness, and organizational commitment. All factors are believed to be important. Other factors which are found to influence employees their job satisfaction are interpersonal trust, type of work, and income. The latter is believed by many people it should not be the only reason for someone to work for, although it is found to be highly influential. And their is so much more to learn about this new way of working!

Work-life balance, is also explored during this research. The most interesting findings is that people working remotely are highly satisfied with their work-life balance. Even though it is challenging, maybe more then in a conventional way of working, it is worth the challenge. Remote workers find the possibility to work remote and everything they get from remote working much more important then the downsides and challenges. Work-life balance is important to them, and probably by the fact that it is more visible, they are trying hard to improve their balances. Many believe that you should be the right person to work remote and that some personal traits can positively influence the happiness and satisfaction in remote working, but that is probably the same for office workers. Long it has been normal to everyone to work from the office, and hardly anyone ever asked which traits you needed to be the perfect office worker. But the questioned raises when talking about remote working.

Being at the point of time, where a people whom grow up with computers are ready to start working and are starting to become a more dominant part of the work force, it is absolute an interesting and important topic to invest in. I believe giving your employees the opportunity to choose how they want to work, will generate the best results.

7.3 Scientific implications

During the study of this research a gap was found in the literature according to remote working. It is found that there is more literature about distributed teams which are located in offices, but this is

believed to have different needs. This paper is an explorative research which give hypothesizes and directions for further research. Based on the fact that this is a new research subject, an exploitative research gave insight in the directions which could be discovered in more depth in the future. It is believed this paper does have scientific value. This exploitative research can be used as the base and give direction to further research.

This research aims to provide an exploitative study and give direction to further research. While carrying out the research many gaps in literature were found. Unfortunately, this project was limited to a small time frame, which made it impossible to implement all the ideas which came up while working on this project. All these ideas and literature gaps have been gathered and forms the basis to the ideas for future research.

Remote work

Research in the field of remote working offers an opportunity where theory and practice can work together. Therefore, while several future research opportunities are based on unresolved theoretical issues, others emerged from the practitioner literature where issues such as emerging technologies and member well-being are frequently discussed. Research in the field of remote working has moved into the field not long ago, and the types studies are still limited. Based on the fact that an increasing part of the workforce will work remotely in the nearby future opportunities to expand research in this field are numerous. The ones which are found during this study are named.

This research shows that the majority of people working remotely, or at least the easiest to reach, are Americans. Based on online blogs, it can be assumed that the percentage of Americans working fully remote is bigger than in other countries. It is an interesting study, to find out why. Supplementary, out of personal experience it is found that the attitude towards remote working varies a lot from country to country. Maybe one of the reasons why it has been grown rapidly in America, but less in other countries.

Another finding during this study is that the age group between 30 and 40 is much bigger than other age groups. Which is also found in the study of TINYPulse (2016). They surveyed 509 employees and the majority (58%) is between the ages of 25 and 44. So while there are some millennials in this group, its mostly made up of Gen X. Another interesting finding is the discrepancy in job satisfaction between older and younger workers is rooted in the nature of the work they do (Bothun et al., 2016). 43% of Baby Boomers (born between 1945 and 1965) are business owners, while only 13% of Millennials (born between 1977 and 1994) are. Just 1% of Gen Z-ers (born between 1995 and 2012) are business owners. So while many Baby Boomers enjoy the autonomy to set their own hours and make meaningful decisions, few in younger generations share those privileges. For example, while 58% of workers under the age of 35 say they are allowed to work from home only occasionally or not at all, 60% of Baby Boomers have the authority to work from home one day a week or more (Bothun et al., 2016). So it sounds like it, that every generation is searching for the comparable level of autonomy. Unfortunately, the age group of Baby Boomers is to small to draw conclusions during this research. A interesting field for further research.

During this study a big difference is found between the amount of male and females filling out the questionnaire. This can be partially explained by the fact that most people are working in IT. In this field, the percentage of males is higher then females. Although, it is believed that this is not the only reason. During the study of TINYPulse (2016), there was found an even mix of men and woman. The influence of man and woman and there attitude towards remote working is interesting. An finding which should be explored in more detail in the future.

During this study, one's level op education is not taken into consideration. In scientific literature (Hill et al., 2001) it is stated that a higher level of ones occupation, the more difficulty with work-family balance. While this is never related to remote work, it could be interesting it this also holds for remote workers.

During the interviews none of the interviewees wanted to leave the company they are currently working for. Which is surprisingly after the findings of Bothun et al. (2016), saying about 33% of the workforce expects to be at a different job in the next six months. Everyone in the interviews mentioned a very low employee turnover rate, which they all appreciated and did not want to change jobs themselves. This research only concludes that this is a striking difference, the reason why this difference is there could be related to feeling highly appreciated and could be explored in future research.

TINY Pulse (2016) found a sizeable group (22%) who work remotely because their job requires them to. These employees had very different answers from the freedom-loving workers when it came to workplace happiness, feelings of appreciation, and retention. It is also found that for one who loves to work remotely, it can positively influence their job satisfaction, but for one who does not like this, it can negatively influence it. Which can be an interesting field of research. This is a field which needs more attention. An interesting question could be, how can we help the employees who need to work remote better in adopting their new work style?

During this study many references are made to Lund (2003). This document is one of the best publications in this field, the reason why it is used in this paper. Although it is in some sense outdated due to the fast changing field. For example, workers now migrate from job to job over their career in search of greater fulfillment and compensation (Doyle, 2017). Changing jobs every couple of years used to look bad on a resume. That stigma is fast becoming antiquated. This sentiment is different than the belief of past generations that you cling to an employer over a lifetime. The current workers who often migrate from job to job are believed to have a higher learning curve, be higher performers, and even to be more loyal (Giang, 2016). A trend of the last years which is not confirmed by scientific literature. This probably is also one of the reasons remote workers do not mind about having less promotion opportunities. Promotion opportunities are often searched outside of the current employer (Doyle, 2017). An interesting field to explore for scientific literature.

People currently living in lower-to-middle income countries or upper-to-middle income countries have a high agreement of remote work being part of the job satisfaction. The majority of employees living in these countries have different job opportunities as people living in high income countries. Being able to work remotely gives them the opportunity to work for a company based in another country. Which gives them a chance to earn a higher income while still life with their family. A subject which needs more research. During this research it is found that there is a difference found although the group of people spoken to is not enough to conclude from.

People who work less than 50% of their time remotely and people of whom less than 50% of the colleagues work remotely, disagree higher to the fact that remote working contributes highly to their job satisfaction. Although this group is too small to draw conclusions from. A finding which should be explored in more detail.

A more personal finding is that fully remote companies hardly offer junior job openings. Currently the majority of jobs are open for seniors. During the interviews many of the interviewees found the same and thought that this is because of difficulties of schooling. An interesting question could be, how can companies easier adopt juniors into a fully remote position.

While studying this topic, one question rose. People are really happy with their jobs, but what is the influence of a different management style which comes along with remote working? For example, it is hardly possible to micromanage in a fully remote company. In which degree does this contribute to the satisfaction of remote workers?

Cultural differences

Lauring & Selmer (2012) studied the impact of shared common language and variation in proficiency level of a language on co-located multicultural teams. He discovered that it does have an important impact on team cohesiveness, team effectiveness and knowledge sharing (Lauring & Selmer, 2012). This is also found for geographically dispersed multicultural teams, during this research. Which is

not found in scientific literature before. Although a direct relation between language proficiency and work-life balance is not found during this research, this finding is interesting. Furthermore, several researchers have argued that more empirical studies are needed to understand virtual communication in an inter-cultural context (Connaughton & Shuffler 2007; Gibson & Gibbs 2006).

A specific question according to cultural differences in relation to job satisfaction or work-life balance is asked during the interviews. It was answered by two interviewees that they did not see any cultural differences when it comes to job satisfaction or work-life balance. The majority had a similar feeling, but found it hard to be sure about this. The two interviewees mentioned that when sharing the same values and ideas about remote working the product you are working on, and share the same work values there are not many differences left. Maybe there are differences culturally, but they believed that two people from the same culture could observe a bigger differences between them when they do not share the same values. Due to this same mindset, they do not have the feeling of differences in their team. This topic should be explored in more detail in further research because a conclusion can not be drawn based on two people.

It can be concluded that during this research there is not enough evidence to conclude if a difference is experienced in culture according to job satisfaction or work-life balance. A more in-depth study is needed. Although, it is found that remote workers tend to find cultural difference but find it difficult to explain it detail. The major challenges for remote workers are not found in differences perspective on job satisfaction or work-life balance but more in language and difference in work ethic. The latter does influence the perspective on job satisfaction or work-life balance. Although the direct relation is not confirmed during this research and is an interesting field to explore in further research.

Digital Nomads

Remote work enables digital nomads to earn money while traveling. A group people which is increasing rapidly. It is hard to track down how many digital nomads there are at the moment. As a relatively new phenomenon, not much public research exists yet. It is impossible to predict the future, but Gelgota (2017), tried to do this based on the current public data. His expectation is that there will be one billion by 2035. If that will be true, the future will learn us. A fact is that the group of digital nomads is increasing rapidly. A group who can become an increasing part of work force which will become an interesting group of people to explore. In the paper *The digital nomad: Buzzword or research category?* Mller, explores the field of digital nomads and if it is going to a research category. She believes that a better understanding about digital nomads would be necessary.

8 Validity

This sections describes the validity of the data and information used and collected during this research. The document has been evaluated by an occupational and organizational psychologist with a broad experience in management consulting. First the data is validated and after that the findings are discussed.

8.1 Data validation

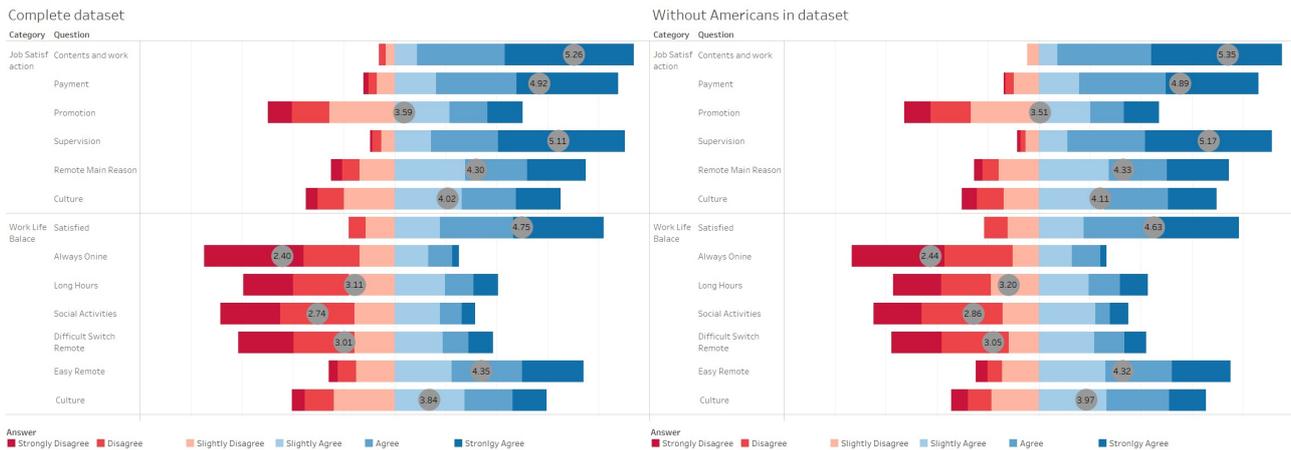


Figure 7: The dataset visualized with and without Americans

One of the major uncertainties of the collected data is the fact that the questionnaire is mainly filled out by people living in the United States of America. Almost 50% of the people who filled out the questionnaire turned out to be American or currently living in America. This research is interested in a global view and focused on American opinions. The dataset was decomposed in a set of Americans and a set of non-Americans. The data used is representative for a broader group of people, and does not only take American opinions into consideration. It can be concluded that the results are not influenced by Americans and representative for a broader group of remote workers.

8.2 Validity of findings

It should be mentioned at first, that the people whom are approached all work for remote companies and did personally choose to fill out the survey. This could have influences the results. The interviewees are people whom are open to an interview and are willing to talk about this topic. Which could have been from major influence.

Although the research has reached its aims, there were some unavoidable limitations. First, the time limit. Finding and being able to work for a good company did took much more time then was expected in the beginning. Furthermore, the researcher did not have many experience with this topic, nor with related topics.

Other limitations found during this research where: the sample size of the survey and interviews. If more interviews were conducted, which was not possible in the time set, a better understanding could have been realized. Next to that, specific interviews could have been conducted, related to specific themes found in scientific literature.

Literature research has been conducted during the first phase and during the validation phase. This has been based on some keywords that have been used based on best-knowledge of the field and try and error. It cannot be guaranteed that these keywords cover all articles related to this topic. Furthermore, the search was limited to the Scopus research database and Google Scholar . This

might have excluded specifications that are the result of other pilot projects that come from the field of practice and have not yet been published in the field of research. Nonetheless, there has to be some restraints to keep the level of depth and therefore amount of time manageable.

The literature found it obtained as one of the biggest limitations. There are hardly any publications in the specific field of fully remote working and no publications according to digital nomads. More publications and research in this field would have been helpful. The last important limitation where is the lack of prior research on the positive sides of distributed teams. Most publications are only about the issues obtained in distributed teams, but there is hardly any research conducted based on the positive sides of distributed teams and what can be learned from this. A major limitation to this study.

Despite the limitations, it is believed that the findings are of a decent foundation that they can be used for further research.

9 Conclusion

Our knowledge about distributed teams is continuously growing. Organizations start embracing remote working although the exact pros and contras are still unclear, more research is needed on the impact of remote work on working life and how it is related to job satisfaction. The goal of this research is to get a better understanding about two important issues amongst those working remotely, job satisfaction and work-life balance issues. Additionally the influence of cultural differences on these topics are researched. This research is an explorative study focused on the aforementioned topics in the context of remote work. Based on findings of previous research the importance of these topics have been determined and chosen. Job satisfaction was deemed the most important advantage and work-life balance the hardest issue to overcome. The influence of cultural difference on these two topics is taken into consideration in a separate section. The information was collected from three different sources: nonscientific and scientific literature, a questionnaire, and in-depth interviews.

In this chapter the conclusions of the three research questions are discussed. Beginning with job satisfaction, followed by work-life balance, and cultural differences.

9.1 Job satisfaction

RQ1: What are perceived to be the main influencing factors for the high levels of job satisfaction by remote workers?

Remote offices are increasing in popularity. Different scientific studies showed that flexible workers have higher levels of overall job satisfaction. A direct influence of remote work on job satisfaction is found in scientific literature, but the influencing factors on job satisfactions are not discussed in previous scientific literature. During this research, the main influencing factors for remote workers on their job satisfaction are explored. It is found that remote working employees tend to love their jobs, even if the remote part is the only part they really like about it. Below are the specific conclusions of the different influencing factors on job satisfaction for remote workers.

Freedom of work

The reasons employees work remote can vary widely. The most popular one given was that they enjoy having the freedom of choosing when and where to work (41%). Others cited family needs and a dislike of working in an office. A sizable group (22%) work remotely because their job requires them to. During this research, the similar results are found. Until now, freedom of work, was correlated to job satisfaction in scientific literature. But there is no relation confirmed in scientific literature between freedom of work for remote workers and their job satisfaction. The impact is substantial and called by the majority of remote workers as an essential part of their job satisfaction.

Flexibility not only contributes to job satisfaction, it can also shore up productivity. All of the interviewees agreed to be more productive outside the office.

However, the kind of remote working arrangements introduced within an organisation should be considered carefully. It is safe to say that flexibility is important. This also includes the flexibility to not work remotely.

Autonomy

Autonomy in the work place influences many different aspects for employees. Autonomy was not included in the questionnaire of this research. During the interviews everyone described the importance of autonomy, Which for them contributed highly to their job satisfaction. Similar findings are found in scientific literature. Although it is confirmed in scientific literature that there is a positive relation

between autonomy and job satisfaction, for remote workers an addition can be made. Remote workers seem to have a higher level of autonomy which makes the positive contribution probably even higher.

This autonomy also contributes to a remote worker's schedule. During this research, no specific attention was paid to when they work, but during the interviews it was obtained that creating your own schedule is found to be extremely important. For the majority of the interviewees it did have a great impact on their work-life balance and indirectly on their job satisfaction.

Another interesting finding is the discrepancy in job satisfaction between older and younger workers is rooted in the nature of the work they do. It is found in literature that every generation is searching for the comparable level of autonomy. Unfortunately, some specific age groups were too small to draw conclusions during this research.

Appreciation

In literature it is mentioned that not only autonomy, but also appreciation as an substantial influencing factor on the current and future work force. This topic was not included in the questionnaire because it was not suspected to contribute in a sufficient degree. During the interviews it was clear that this expectation was unfounded. The majority of the interviewees indicated that one of the major reasons for being satisfied in their job is due to way the company treats them. Scientific literature confirms that there is a significant relationship between employees job satisfaction and reward and recognition. Although it is not specific correlated before to remote workers in scientific research, the appreciation seems to be highly important to them and contributed to their job satisfaction.

During the interviews, the majority explains that they sincerely care about the company. None of them wanted to leave the company they are currently working for. Everyone in the interviews mentioned a very low employee turnover rate, which they all appreciated. Furthermore, none of the interviewees wanted to change their existing job. This researches only concludes that this is a striking difference, the reason for this difference to exists could be related to feeling highly appreciated and could be explored in future research

Interpersonal Trust

In scientific literature it is found that successful teamwork is built on a foundation of trust. It is found that there are two factors that influence building a trustful relation in distributed teams: diverse location and electronic communication. Higher levels of trust and respect are related to higher levels of job satisfaction. During a former study and during the interviews it is found that high levels of interpersonal trust and respect are important to remote worker's jobs, which influences their job satisfaction.

Content/type of work

In scientific literature it is mentioned that the content or type of work is a factor that influences job satisfaction. During this research it was tested whether this also held true for remote workers. Due to the outcomes of the questionnaire (chapter 6.1.5) and the interviews it can be concluded that the content or the type of work also influences the job satisfaction for remote workers.

Income

Its easy to assume that the more a person is paid, the happier that they will be. Although there are some limits found in literature, it is found that financial benefits play an important role in enhancing employees job satisfaction. In literature is found that financial benefits play an important role in

enhancing employees job satisfaction. This can also be related to remote workers, because they tend to be extremely happy with their financial situation, which contributes to their job satisfaction. Some of the interviewees also point to the fact that they have chosen this company based on the fact that these companies usually pay higher salaries.

During the interviews it is obvious that everyone is not only satisfied with their income but also with the fringe benefits. In scientific literature it is examined that the relationship between fringe benefit and job satisfaction is positive. Which seems to be the same for remote workers.

Promotions

In scientific literature it is found that promotion opportunities are important to employees contributing to their job satisfaction. A question on this topic was posed in the questionnaire. Surprisingly, the answers contradicted the findings described in scientific literature. During the interviews the reason behind this disagreement was explored, and the finding here was even more surprising than the finding in the questionnaire. All the interviewees indicate that they hardly have promotion opportunities but do not mind this. The job they currently fulfill is the one they love to do. Even though there are not that many promotion opportunities it does not contribute negatively to their job satisfaction because they are happy with the job they are currently fulfilling. Which is contradicting with the scientific findings.

Supervision

According to scientific literature it was expected that supervision is important to employees in their job satisfaction.

In literature it is researched how often remote employees wanted contact with their supervisor, the most popular choice was a weekly frequency. It is indicated that it is not necessarily a matter of how or even when, effective management and feedback can happen even in ways that we do not typically expect to see. Many of the remote workers love their freedom and so called micromanagement can crush their engagement.

When asked during the interviews the interviewees do find a positive correlation between their supervision and jobs satisfaction, but it was found less important then stated in scientific literature. The findings are more in line with non-scientific literature. They are satisfied with their supervision but do not need high amount of contact with their supervisor to achieve this satisfaction.

9.2 Work-life balance

RQ2: What is the perceived influence of remote work on one's work-life balance?

It is found in scientific literature that the perception of virtual office workers was that remote working had a neutral influence on work-life balance. However, virtual office workers reported significantly less balance between their work and life and less personal-family success than traditional office workers or home office workers. On the other hand, the same study found that working primarily from the home office was linked to more positive perceptions of work-life balance and greater perception of personal-family success. During this study two interesting issues were found. First, the majority is happy with work-life balance even though it comes along with quite some challenges. Second, Work-life balance is an important and often discussed topic under remote workers.

Satisfied and challenging

According to scientific literature, employees working in a virtual office have more difficulty with work-life balance than traditional office workers. This finding is confirmed during this study. During the interviews it is found that the majority of interviewees does have mixed feelings about their work-life balance when it is related to remote working. They mentioned that they are satisfied with their work-life balance, but that remote working makes it more challenging. Despite the challenge, everyone mentioned they like the challenge and are working hard to tackle it.

The finding of scientific literature is confirmed to the fact that remote workers find difficulties in finding balance between work and life. However, remote workers tend to see this as an challenge and not as a downside of remote working. The latter is never confirmed before in scientific literature.

Importance of Work-life balance

During the interviews it stand outs that work-life balance is found to be an important topic under remote workers. All the interviewees had a clear and direct answer to all the questions related to work-life balance. All of them are highly engaged to this subject and pro-actively trying to improve their balance.

The findings of this research in some ways contradict with scientific findings. In scientific literature it is found that virtual office workers reported significantly poorer work-life balance but in the same study that working primarily from the home office was linked to more positive perceptions of work-life balance (more detailed information and explanation of the terms can be found in chapter 6.2). Fully remote employees, which are studied in this research, are mostly both. Working from a home office but also in a virtual office. There are no scientific documents specific on the relation between work-life balance and remote workers. It can be concluded that for remote workers, work-life balance seems to be an important topic and highly valued. Overall they seem to be satisfied with their balance between work and life.

Influencing factors

It is believed that the influence of knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) highly contribute to maintaining the right work-life balance. It is found that skills concerning time- and self-management are particularly important, they are found to be pivotal for constructing work-life balance in dispersed working contexts (Koehne et al., 2012). Motivation towards these challenges are found important. It is found that other KSAO's also influence the work-life balance highly, but also the ease to adapt and overcome challenges according to work-life balance.

For all the interviewees the engagement of the company into this topic is found to be really important. They mention that it highly contributes to the ease of finding the balance between work and life. By this reason, the engagement of a company is highly valued by the interviewees and seen as a positive influencing factor on their own work-life balance. Although this has not been confirmed in scientific research before.

Another influencing factor, which is specific for one group, is traveling. Digital nomads tend to build different work-life balances than people working from a fixed location. When looking at the effects hereof on work-life balance it is found that when changing country, a new balance should be found again every time. The time to find this balance depends on a person, but many say it takes them about a month. It is found to become easier but the transition period stays. Digital nomads, is a new research topic, which is not explored as of yet.

9.3 Cultural differences

RQ3: What are perceived to be the most essential differences in cultural perspectives on job satisfaction and work-life balance?

Cultural diversity is a primary antecedent, along with geographical distribution, of distributed teams. Cultural identity causes differences in beliefs, expectations, basic assumptions, and behavior and these differences influence distributed teams. The reactions to work and family demands differ among people across countries and continents at various levels of economic development. These differences can also affect one's perspective on job satisfaction and work-life balance.

In the questionnaire two questions were included related to cultural differences asking if the candidates have the feeling that there are cultural differences according to the perspective on job satisfaction and work-life balance. Both were answered with slight agreement, but the answers were divided. Feedback during the interviews gave the information that everyone had a different understanding of the questions. It can be concluded that the question was too ambiguous. During the interviews, it was found that everyone found it hard to answer the questions. Most of them experienced a difference, but found it hard to name the differences. The few who are able to explain it in more detail found it difficult to link cultural differences with job satisfaction or work-life balance.

There are two striking differences remote workers seem to face. Firstly, the difference in work ethics between Europe and the United States of America. Secondly, the challenges of working with non-native and native English speakers.

The major cultural differences were found to exist between the cultures of the United States of America and Europe. The norms and values on work ethic between these countries is believed to be intense. The different views on work ethics also results in a different view on job satisfaction and work-life balance. A high percentage of the interviewees described Americans as workaholics, even when they were from the USA themselves. American workers do have a different perspective on working hours and vacation days. In many companies this causes challenges. Although this difference is confirmed by literature it is not often related to remote teams.

In scientific literature the impact of shared common language and variation in proficiency level of a language on co-located multicultural teams is explored. It is discovered that this does have an important impact on team cohesiveness, team effectiveness and knowledge sharing. During this research, this was also found to be true for geographically dispersed multicultural teams. Although a direct relation between language proficiency and work-life balance and job satisfaction is not found during this research, this finding is interesting.

Furthermore, the challenges of working with a combination of non-native and native English speakers were mentioned amongst the interviewees. Mainly the native English speakers mentioned this challenge. As English is often the common language for employees working in virtual teams, variations in proficiency and style of language use will often exist between group members. The different levels of English also increases the challenges in understanding each other's cultures.

It can be concluded that during this research there is not enough evidence to conclude that a difference in culture is related to job satisfaction or work-life balance. In order to be able to draw such a conclusion, a more in-depth study is needed. Although the direct relation is not confirmed during this research, it is an interesting field to explore in further research. Furthermore, the influences of language and different work ethics are an interesting field for further research as well.

Contribution

9.3.1 Contribution to scientific literature

During the study of this research a gap was found in the literature regarding remote working. It was found that there is more literature about distributed teams which are located in offices, but this group is believed to have different needs. This explorative study revealed new insights and starting points for further research as mentioned in chapter 7.3. An exploration study helps to determine suitable research designs, data-collection methods and selection of subjects. It will be easier to select specific research subjects and easier to get a decent overview of the importance of different subjects. New hypotheses can be developed as the foundation for further research. Subsequently, the most important issues for further research will be summarized.

This research shows that the majority of people working remotely, or at least the easiest to reach, are Americans. It is also found that the age group between 30 and 40 is much bigger than other age groups. During this study a higher amount of males than females were reached. The influence of man and woman and their attitudes towards remote working is interesting. All these differences were also found during this study, however the reasons behind it were not. This can however be an interesting subject for further research.

It can be seen that there is a sizable group that works remotely because their job requires them to. An interesting question could be: how can we help the employees who need to work remote better in adopting their new work style?

While studying this topic, one question rose. People are really happy with their jobs, but what is the influence of a different management style that comes with working remotely? It is found that remote companies have a very low employee turnover. The current employees also did not want to leave their current job. This is contradicting with the findings in literature about the employee turnover of corporate companies. The reason as to why these differences exist should be explored.

It is found that remote workers do not mind having less promotion opportunities. Over the last years, a change has been found in the culture surrounding the frequency of job-changing. This new trend is that promotion opportunists are often searched outside of the current employer. An interesting field to explore for scientific literature.

For people living in lower income countries, remote work can enable opportunities like working for companies based in other countries whilst still living with their families. This subject is not researched during this study.

There is not enough evidence to conclude that a difference in culture is related to job satisfaction or work-life balance. While this was not found during this study it can serve as a subject for further research.

It is found that fully remote companies hardly offer junior job openings. An interesting question could be: how can companies adopt juniors into a fully remote positions more easily? Furthermore, the field of digital nomads is also an completely unexplored subject.

It can be concluded that there are many more interesting subjects which should be explored in further research.

9.3.2 Contribution to business

During this research it is found, that the satisfaction of remote workers is high. It is found that freedom of work, autonomy and appreciation do highly contribute to employees their job satisfaction and indirectly influences many other topics. It can for example reduce employee turnover, sick-leave, overall happiness, and organizational commitment. Other factors which are found to influence employees their job satisfaction are interpersonal trust, type of work, and income. The latter is

believed by many people it should not be the only reason for someone to work for, although it is found to be highly influential. And there is so much more to learn about this new way of working!

Work-life balance, is also explored during this research. The most interesting findings is that people working remotely are highly satisfied with their work-life balance. Even though it is challenging, maybe more than in a conventional way of working, it is worth the challenge. Remote workers find the possibility to work remote and everything they get from remote working much more important than the downsides and challenges. Many believe that you should be the right person to work remote and that some personal traits can positively influence the happiness and satisfaction in remote working, but that is probably the same for office workers.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire questions

General Questions

1. First, may I ask your age?

15 –20

20 –25

25 –30

30 –40

40 –50

50 –60

Other

2. What is your gender?

Female

Male

Prefer not to day

Other

3. What is your relational status? You can choose two if you have children.

Married

Single

In a relation

Prefer not to say

I have children

Other

4. How many hours a week do you work on average?

–10

10 –20

20 –30

30 –40

40 –50 Other

5. Of those hours, what percentage do you work remotely? (approximately)

Fully Remote

Less then 50

More then 50

Other

6. Would you consider yourself a digital nomad?

Yes

No

Other

9. What is the main reason you work remotely?

It is required for my job

I do not like working in an office

I enjoy the freedom of choosing when or where to work

It accommodates my family needs

Other

Your Work

10. In which department are you working?

Management

Research and Development

Sales

Marketing

Engineering

HR (Human Resources)

Finance

Customer support

IT (Back-end, Front-end, or related)

Something else

Management

11. Are you working freelance or for a company? Please choose the one to which you feel most related when working both freelance and for a company.

Freelance Skip to question 15.

Company Skip to question 12.

Other: Skip to question 15.

Company

12. What is the approximate size of the company?

Less than 25

25 –50

50 –250

More than 250

Other

13. Of your colleagues, what percentage does work remotely?

Everyone (fully remote company)

Less than 50

More than 50

Other:

14. Are your team members distributed across different time zones?

Yes

No

Job Satisfaction

The following questions describe your feelings towards certain job-related issues. For each, please indicate the extent to which you agree / disagree with the statement by clicking the appropriate number on the scale.

Question Number	Full Questions	Keyword
15.	I am satisfied with the contents and work required of me in my job	Contents and work
16.	I would like to have more promotion opportunities.	Promotion
17.	I am satisfied with my supervision.	Supervision
18.	I am satisfied with my payment.	Payment
19.	Being able to work remote, is the main reason I am satisfied with my job.	Remote Main Reason
20.	I believe my interpretation of job satisfaction is different than that of colleagues from different cultures.	Culture

Work-life balance

The following questions describe your feelings towards your work. For each, please indicate the extent to which you agree / disagree with the statement by clicking the appropriate number on the scale.

21.	I am satisfied with my work-life balance	Satisfied
22.	Because the job demands it, I currently work long hours	Long Hours
23.	Finding time for hobbies and leisure activities, or to maintain friendships and extended family relationships is difficult.	Social Activities
24.	It is expected from me, that I am always online.	Always online
25.	It is difficult to switch off my work, because I work remotely	Difficult Switch Remote
26.	For me it is easy to maintain a good work-life balance because I work remote.	Easy Remote
27.	I believe my interpretation of a good work-life balance is different than that of colleagues from different cultures.	Culture

Appendix B

Interview questions

Lets Start!

How did you get into remote working?

Job Satisfaction

Why are you overall satisfied with your job?

How does Remote work contribute to your job satisfaction?

How do you get your supervision?

How do you see your promotion opportunities?

Work-life Balance

What does it mean to you, having a good work life balance?

How do you maintain a good work life balance?

Why do you find working remotely does contributes to maintaining a good work life balance?

Cultural differences

What do you believe is a cultural difference?

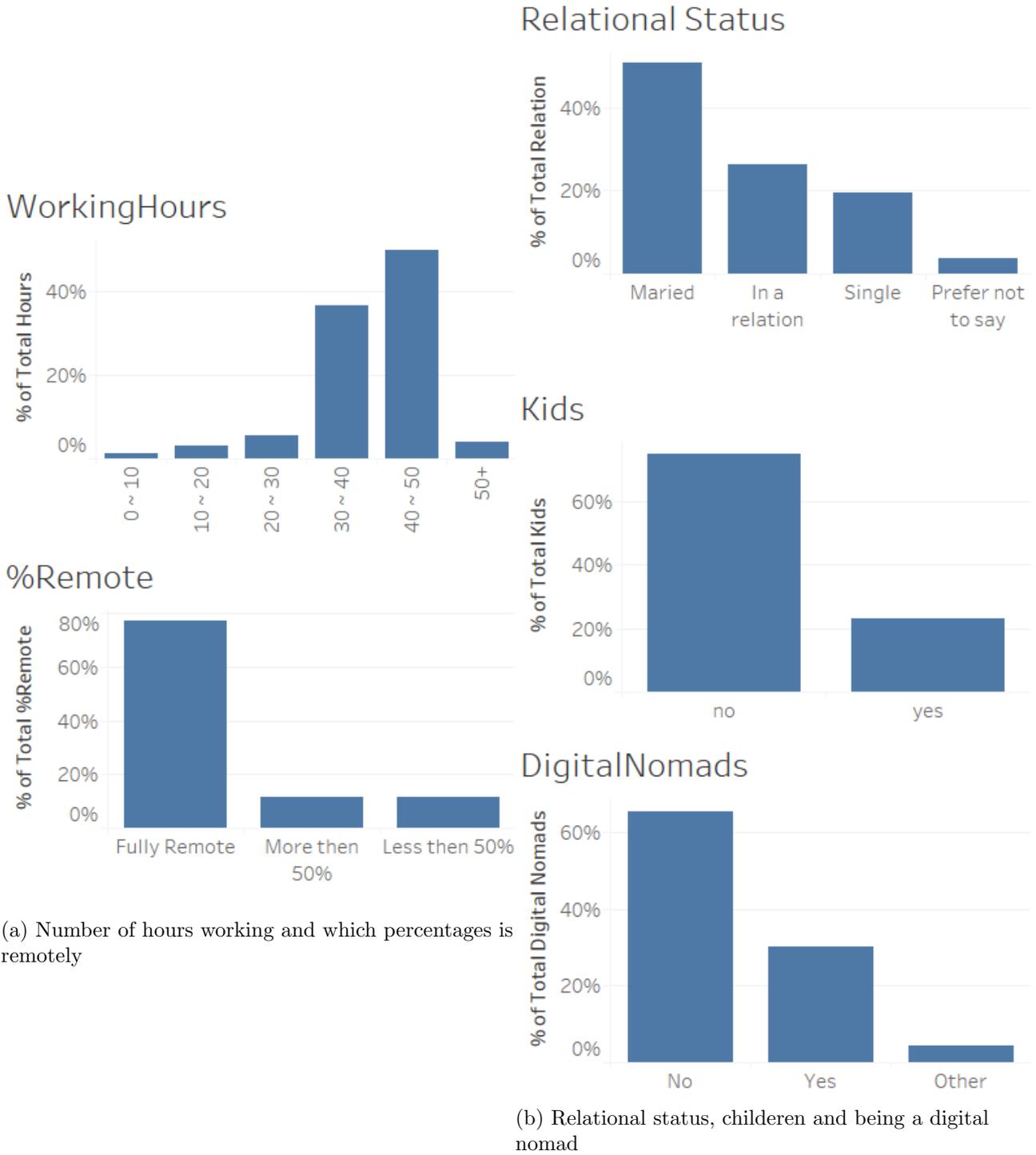
Do you believe there are cultural differences in your team/company?

What do you think, is similar or different, between cultures, in the perspective on Work-life Balance and Job Satisfaction?

Appendix C

Survey results

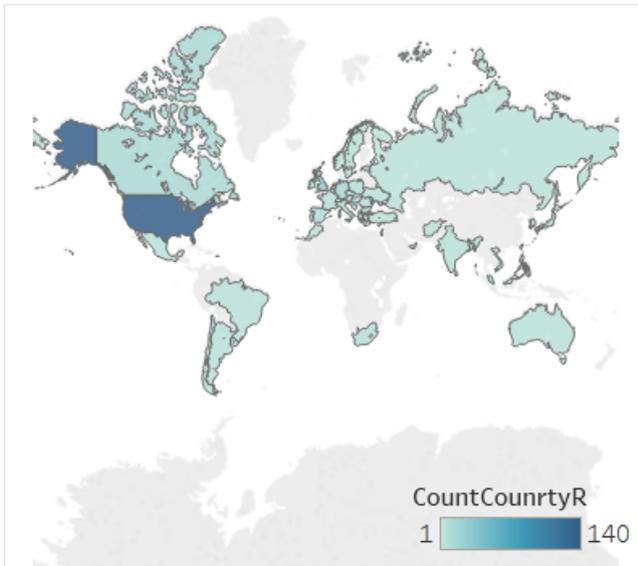
C.1 Demographic data



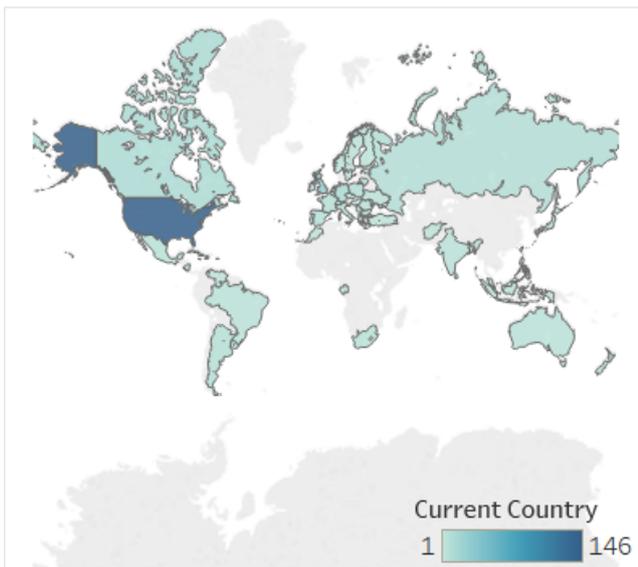
(a) Number of hours working and which percentages is remotely

(b) Relational status, children and being a digital nomad

Current Country



Country Raised

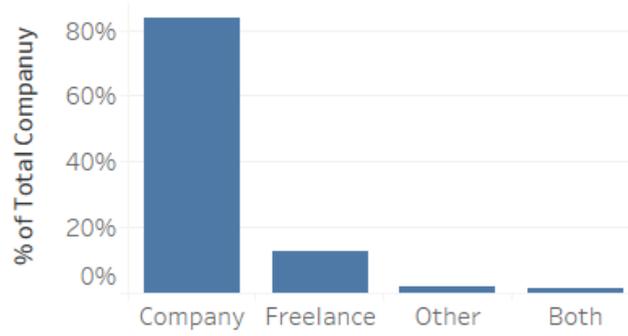


(a) A visualization of the countries

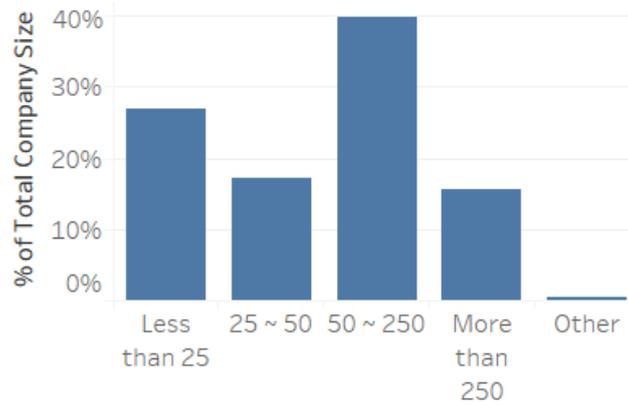
Current Country	Count	Country Raised	Count
United States	146	United States	140
United Kingdom	24	United Kingdom	22
Germany	13	Germany	12
Canada	12	Canada	11
Spain	8	Italy	7
France	5	Poland	7
Italy	5	Russian Feder..	7
Poland	5	Argentina	6
South Africa	5	France	6
Belgium	4	Spain	5
India	4	Belgium	4
Portugal	4	Mexico	4
Argentina	3	Portugal	4
Australia	3	South Africa	4
Brazil	3	Australia	3
Bulgaria	3	Brazil	3
Greece	3	India	3
Ireland {Repub..	3	Ireland {Repub..	3
Japan	3	Romania	3
Mexico	3	Taiwan	3
Netherlands	3	Bulgaria	2
Romania	3	Cuba	2
Taiwan	3	Greece	2
Philippines	2	Lithuania	2
Russian Feder..	2	Moldova	2
Sweden	2	Netherlands	2
Ukraine	2	Norway	2
Afghanistan	1	Philippines	2
Austria	1	Serbia	2
Bangladesh	1	Ukraine	2
Bosnia Herzeg..	1	Afghanistan	1
Chile	1	Bangladesh	1
Cyprus	1	Czech Republic	1
Czech Republic	1	Estonia	1
Estonia	1	Finland	1
Hungary	1	Gabon	1
Israel	1	Haiti	1
Korea South	1	Hungary	1
Macedonia	1	Indonesia	1
Malaysia	1	Jamaica	1
Moldova	1	Japan	1
Morocco	1	Macedonia	1
Norway	1	Malaysia	1
Slovenia	1	Malta	1
Sri Lanka	1	Morocco	1
Switzerland	1	New Zealand	1
Turkey	1	Nicaragua	1
United Arab E..	1	Slovenia	1
Uruguay	1	Sri Lanka	1
Vietnam	1	Sweden	1
		Switzerland	1
		Turkey	1
		Uruguay	1
		Venezuela	1

(b) Representation of the raised and current countries of the candidates

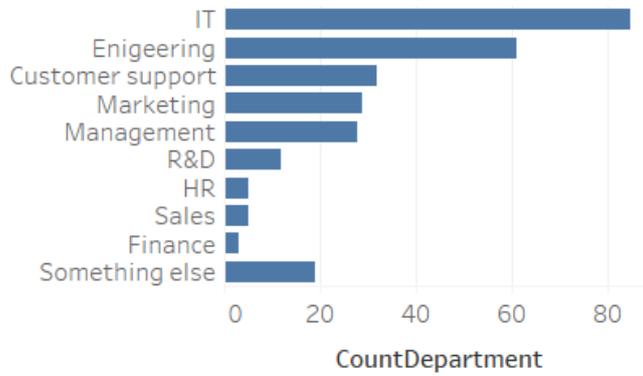
Company



SizeCompany



Department



%Colleagues Work Remote

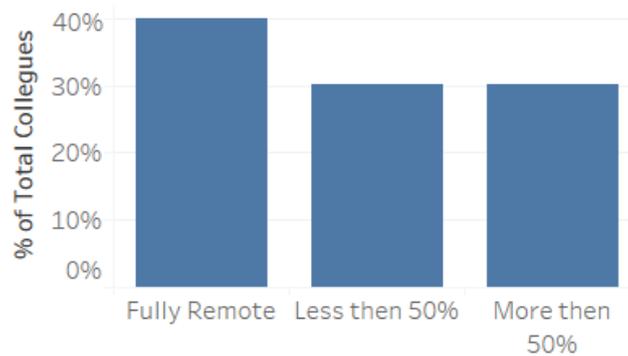
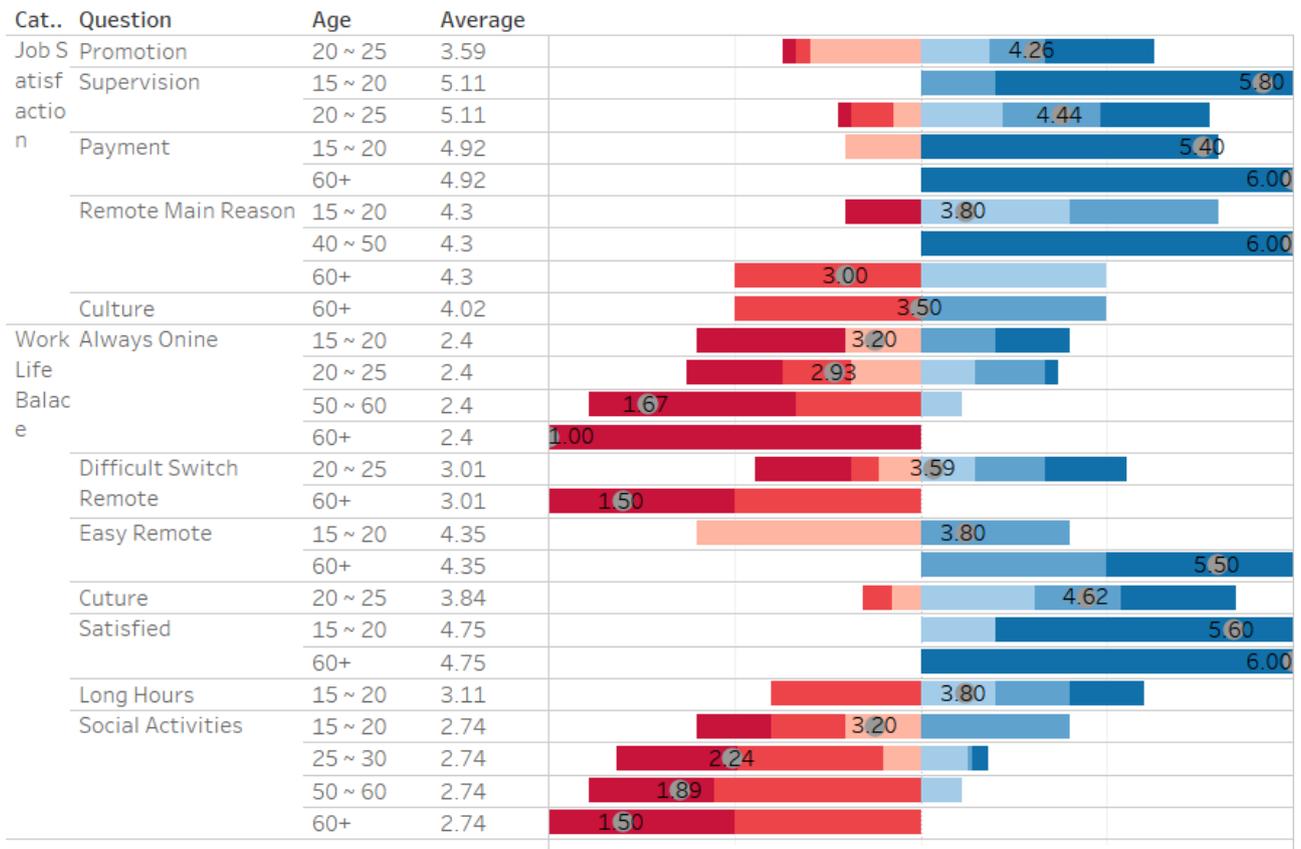


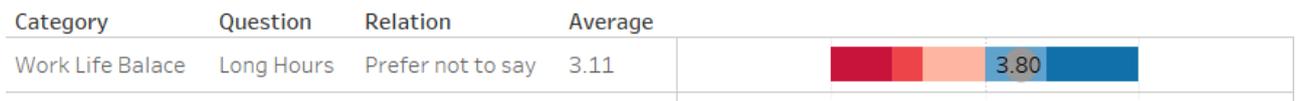
Figure 10: Department, Company or Freelance, and percentage company working remotely

C.2 Exceptions Job Satisfaction and Work-life balance data

Age



Relation



DN

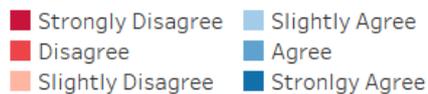
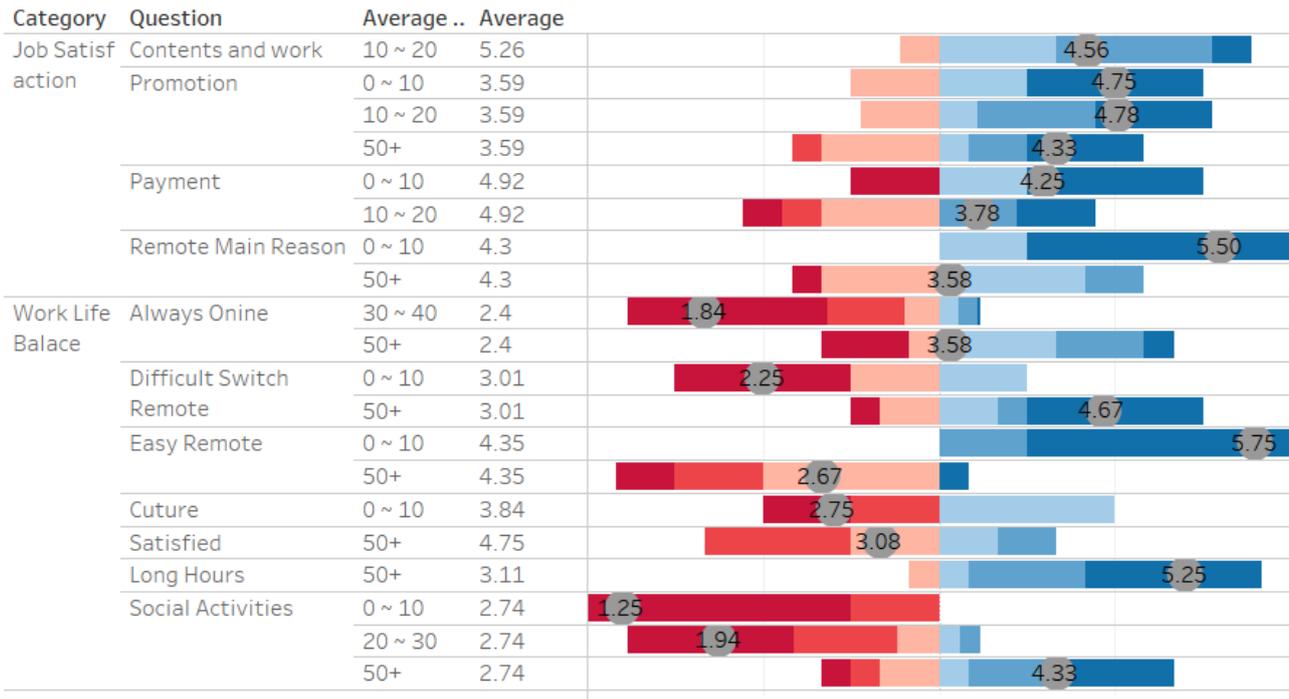
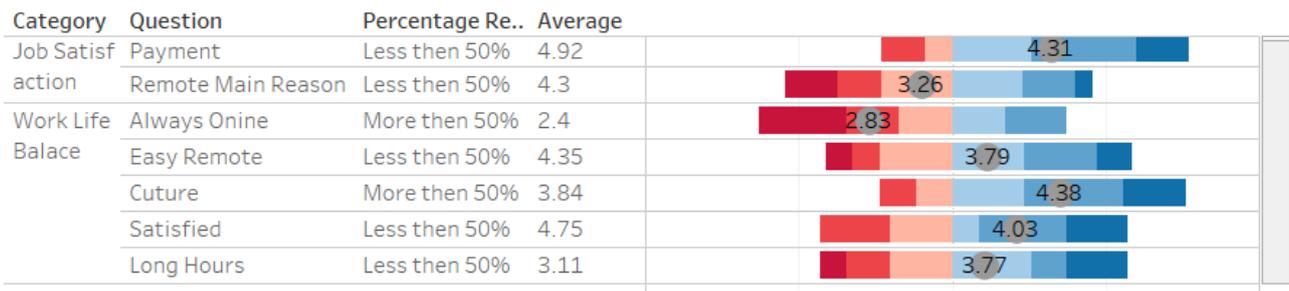


Figure 11: The exceptions of age, relation, digital nomad, and timezone data

WorkingHours



%Remote



RemoteCollueges



Figure 12: The exceptions of hours working, percentage remote, and percentage of remote colleagues data

Company

Category	Question	Company?	Average
Job Satisfaction	Payment	Freelance	4.92
	Remote Main Reason	Freelance	4.3
Work Life Balance	Always Online	Freelance	2.4
	Long Hours	Freelance	3.11

CompSize

Category	Question	Size company	Average
Job Satisfaction	Contents and work	More than 250	5.26
	Supervision	More than 250	5.11
Work Life Balance	Difficult Switch Rem..	More than 250	3.01

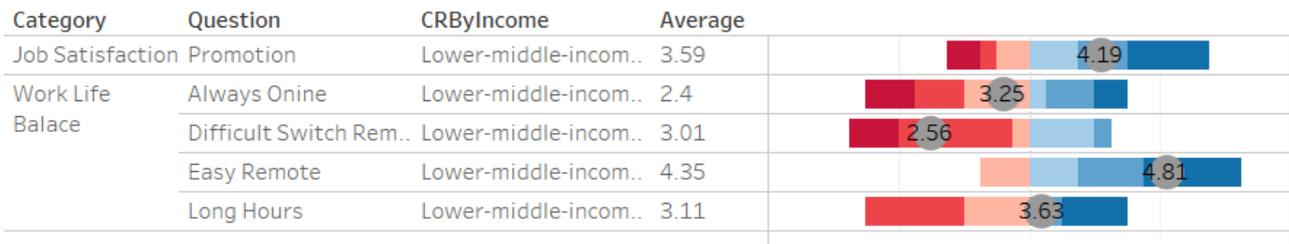
Department

Category	Question	Department	Average
Job Satisfaction	Promotion	Management	3.59
		R&D	3.59
Supervision	Payment	Finance	5.11
		Sales	5.11
		Something else	4.92
		Something else	4.92
Remote Main Reason	Remote Main Reason	Customer support	4.3
		Marketing	4.3
		Sales	4.3
		Something else	4.3
Culture	Culture	HR	4.02
		HR	4.02
Work Life Balance	Always Online	Customer support	2.4
		Engeering	2.4
		R&D	2.4
	Difficult Switch Remote	HR	3.01
		Sales	3.01
	Easy Remote	Customer support	4.35
		Customer support	4.35
	Cuture	Finance	3.84
		HR	3.84
	Satisfied	R&D	4.75
Sales		4.75	
Social Activities	Social Activities	Customer support	2.74
		Management	2.74
		R&D	2.74



Figure 13: The exceptions of company or freelance, company size, and department data

Country Raised Sorted by Income



Current Country sorted by Income

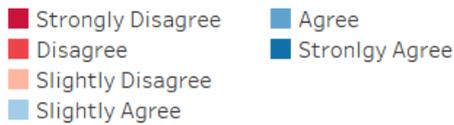
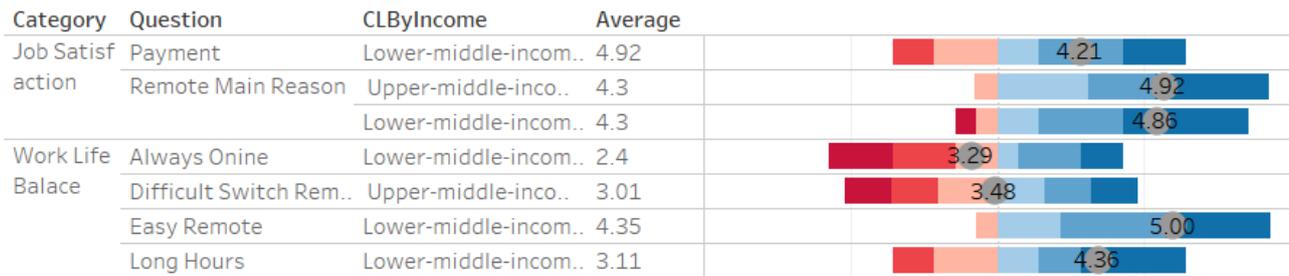
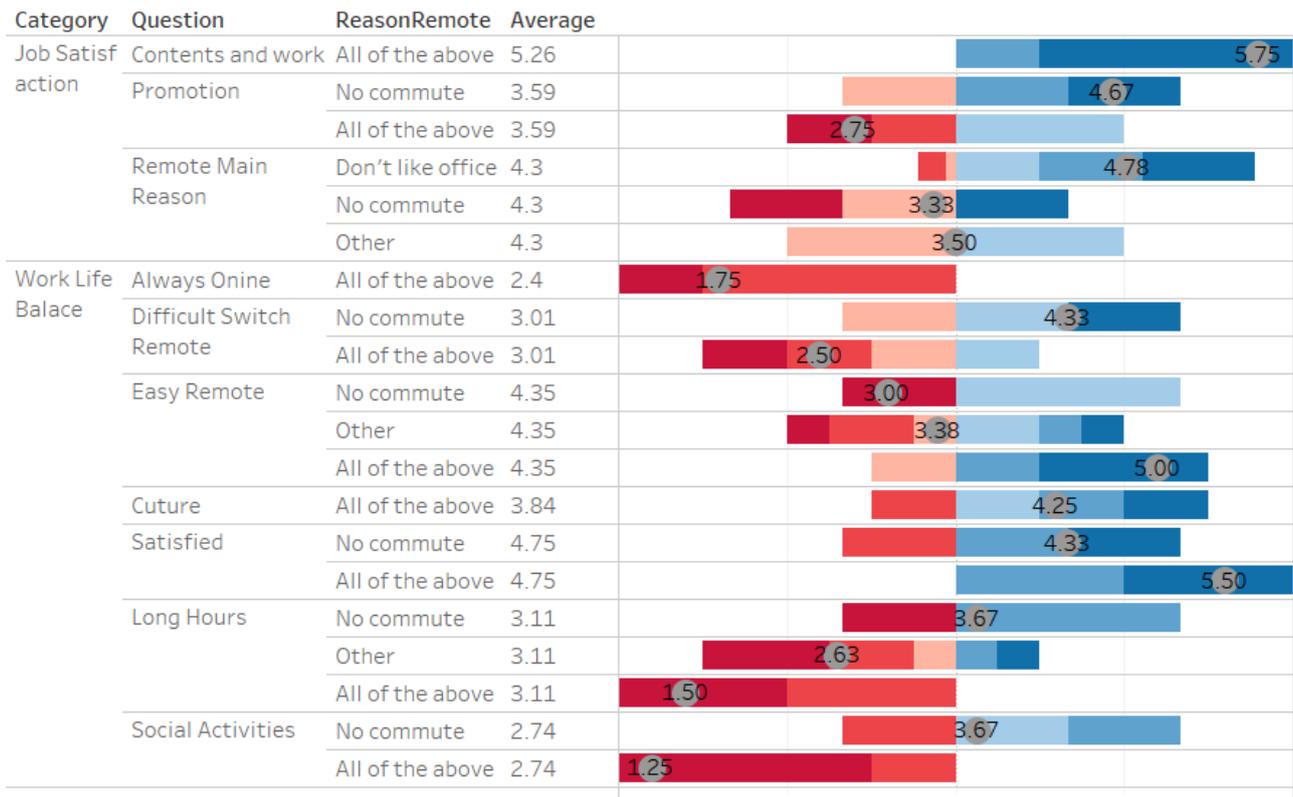


Figure 14: The exceptions of countries sorted by income data

Reason work remote



Timezones



Figure 15: The exceptions of reason and timezone data

Appendix D

Infographic



Figure 16: Infographic for GoalGorilla based on the findings