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From Five to Four: Examining Employee Perspectives Towards the Four-Day Workweek

Mahek Jitendra Jain [1], Niki Chouliara [2] and Holly Blake [3,4,*]

[1] School of Medicine, University of Nottingham, Nottingham NG7 2UH, UK; mahek.mjj@gmail.com
[2] School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences, Loughborough University, Loughborough LE11 3TU, UK; niki.chouliara@nottingham.ac.uk
[3] School of Health Sciences, University of Nottingham, Nottingham NG7 2HA, UK
[4] NIHR Nottingham Biomedical Research Centre, Nottingham NG7 2UH, UK
* Correspondence: holly.blake@nottingham.ac.uk

Abstract: The concept of a four-day workweek (4DWW) has gained traction as organisations explore ways to improve employee well-being and productivity. This study investigates the opportunities, challenges, and perceived feasibility of adopting a 4DWW in the UK, from the perspective of employees on five-day schedules. A qualitative research design was employed, involving semi-structured interviews with 14 participants from diverse sectors, including education, finance, healthcare, and manufacturing. A thematic analysis identified the key benefits, concerns, and contextual influences at an employee, organisational, and wider system level. Switching to a 4DWW was seen as an opportunity to enhance work–life balance and promote employees' well-being and job satisfaction. Concerns were raised about increased workload pressure, coordination difficulties, and financial viability, particularly in roles requiring continuous operations. Findings highlighted the role of strong leadership and clear governmental policy frameworks to support 4DWW adoption and sustained implementation.

Keywords: workforce; work–life balance; employee well-being; four-day workweek

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1. Introduction

In 1926, Henry Ford revolutionised the industrial work schedule by instituting the standard five-day, 40 h workweek, transitioning from the previously prevalent six-day work schedule. Despite this change, achieving a work–life balance remained a substantial challenge for many employees, with work demands often encroaching on personal lives and creating significant conflict (Kossek & Lee, 2017). The four-day workweek (4DWW) has resurfaced as a progressive organisational and cultural approach, focused on improving working conditions and providing employees with a better work–life balance (Orehova & Chepisheva, 2022).

The 'four-day week' refers to a working pattern where organisations offer some or all their staff the ability to work for four days while still being paid a full-time salary (*The Four-Day Week*, 2023). The 4DWW first gained traction in the United States during the 1970s (Gannon, 1974; Hedges, 1971; LaCapra, 1973) and saw a resurgence during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, as businesses sought flexible solutions for reopening under challenging circumstances. In recent years, various versions of 4DWW pilot programmes have been implemented in many countries, including Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, USA, and

the United Arab Emirates (*Countries with a 4 Day Work Week | 4DayWeek.io*, n.d.). In the UK, 'Be The Business', a UK not-for-profit organisation, identified that almost one in five UK companies surveyed were considering implementing the 4DWW as a mechanism for boosting employee productivity (Clarence-Smith, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic contributed to a renewed global interest in the 4DWW. This was further driven by the media, political campaigns, and trade unions rather than the academic community (Veal, 2022), with prior evidence largely from reports published by advocacy groups and organisation's self-reported results rather than scholarly research (Campbell, 2024). There is currently limited academic research surrounding the 4DWW; indeed, a scoping review highlighted the disproportionate number of journal articles in this field from the 1970s (Jahal & Bardoel, 2024). A recent systematic review of academic evidence identified only 31 articles researching the 4DWW (Campbell, 2024). In this review, most studies showed favourable outcomes such as increased morale, job satisfaction, cost reductions, and reduced turnover. However, negative outcomes included performance measures and monitoring being intensified, scheduling problems, and that benefits of the 4DWW may fade over time (Campbell, 2024). Other research has found a positive impact of the 4DWW on employee well-being and stress levels (Chakraborty et al., 2022; Topp et al., 2022; Baltes et al., 1999; Ivancevich, 1974). Organisational benefits include a decline in absenteeism (Hartman & Weaver, 1977; Baltes et al., 1999; Ashford & Kallis, 2013), increased productivity (Vega & Gilbert, 1997; Chakraborty et al., 2022), and a reduction in commuting time and expenses (Hedges, 1971). Despite some encouraging evidence, academic research conveys a more complex picture than the overwhelmingly positive view promoted by the campaigns. Independent and robust evaluative research on the topic is limited (Veal, 2022; Campbell, 2024) and is mainly informed by small organisations or homogenous samples (e.g., a single department or job role). There is a need for research that provides rich insights from more diverse samples with regard to the type and size of the organisation involved (Campbell, 2024).

Most of the research on the 4DWW relies on self-reported questionnaires from employees who are already working a 4DWW or who are comparing their experiences before and after transitioning to this schedule, therefore obtaining a limited understanding of challenges to the adoption and early implementation of the 4DWW. Understanding the views of working adults from a variety of sectors is important to gain insights into the potential acceptability and feasibility of the 4DWW across the broader workforce, and our study aims to address this research gap. The expectations, concerns, and attitudes of those who have not yet experienced the 4DWW are particularly important, as they reflect how receptive working-age adults are to the concept. Employee satisfaction is a critical factor in determining the successful implementation of the 4DWW (Hartman & Weaver, 1977; Sng et al., 2021). To achieve and maximise the benefits of a 4DWW, we would need to consider peoples' needs and preferences. A better understanding of influencing factors would allow employers and policymakers to address stakeholders' concerns and provide appropriate support. It could also inform targeted implementation strategies that ensure a smooth transition to a different model of working, while maximising benefits for both employees and organisations.

A qualitative research design would permit a comprehensive account of employees' attitudes towards the 4DWW, including perceived benefits and risks. We focused on the UK context to examine the perspectives of employees working across a variety of job roles and industries. To address the evidence gap, this study aimed to investigate the feasibility and perceived implications of adopting a 4DWW in the UK with a view to informing future implementation efforts.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Design

This was a qualitative research design to capture the perspectives of employees on the 4DWW. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the perceived benefits, challenges, and feasibility of a 4DWW model within their job roles/industries. Semi-structured interviews offer a flexible and adaptable approach to data collection, allowing for the in-depth examinations of participants' perceptions and experiences (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021).

2.2. Participants

Participants were selected using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. Recruitment aimed to ensure that we achieved variation in terms of the type and size of the organisation. The process concluded once representation from several sectors was achieved, within the constraints of the study's available resources and timeline. Purposive sampling was employed to identify employees from various industries working a five-day workweek. Snowball sampling was then used, and participants were asked to suggest interested individuals who fit the study criteria. This combined approach allowed for a broad and varied sample to be obtained, enhancing the richness and depth of the data collected.

Participants were drawn from various industries, including education, finance, manufacturing, health and social work, real estate, and hospitality. The majority (10 participants) worked in large organisations, while the remaining participants (3 participants) were from small or micro-organisations, with one participant from a nonprofit.

2.3. Procedures

Participants were first approached through community groups and LinkedIn connections. A brief email outlining the research purpose and aims was sent to potential participants, along with a link to a detailed participant information sheet. Interested individuals received an online consent form, and upon consent, interviews were scheduled via Microsoft Teams.

Before the interview researchers provided an overview of the study aims and a definition of the 4DWW, and participants had the opportunity to ask questions. Interviews lasted between 30 and 45 min and were audio recorded.

2.4. Data Analysis

The interview data were analysed based on Braun and Clarke's six stage thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2020). The six stages facilitate the analysis and support the identification of the key aspects of a thematic analysis. These stages include (i) familiarisation with the data, (ii) generating initial codes, (iii) generating themes, (iv) reviewing potential themes, (v) defining and naming themes, and (iv) producing the report. While the stages are presented sequentially, the process of analysis is recursive and iterative, and therefore, we moved back and forth through phases as necessary (Braun & Clarke, 2020). Following this approach, themes were developed from codes conceptualised as patterns of shared meaning centred around a core organising concept. A deductive (top-down) process was first followed to code data under three overarching themes corresponding to implications and influences at the level of (1) the employee, (2) the organisation, and (3) the wider system. Codes and subthemes were then inductively (bottom-up) developed under each organising theme and grounded in the data. This hybrid process helped ensure that key dimensions were considered while effectively organising and conveying rich insights from the dataset and extracting relevant messages for a range of stakeholders.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

All participants provided informed consent before their interviews, ensuring that they were fully aware of this study's purpose and their rights. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by substituting participants' names with identifiers (P1, P2, P3, etc.) throughout the research process.

3. Results

Fourteen employees agreed to take part (eight women, six men, age range of 18–60 years). Participants' characteristics are shown in Table 1. The thematic network (Table 2) captured perceived challenges, opportunities, and contextual influence for employees, companies, and the wider system.

Table 1. Participant characteristics.

ID	Age Range	Gender	No. of Children	Job Role	Employing Organisation Size	Job Sector
P1	23–30	Male	0	Analyst	SME (Small)	Real Estate Activities
P2	23–30	Female	0	Social Worker	SME (Small)	Human Health and Social Work Activities
P3	23–30	Female	0	Manufacturing Engineer	Large	Manufacturing
P4	49–54	Male	0	Occupational Health and Well-Being Lead	Large	Construction
P5	37–42	Female	2	University Academic	Large	Education
P6	23–30	Male	0	Market Insight Officer	Large	Education
P7	23–30	Female	0	Financial Conduct Authority	Large	Financial and Insurance Activities
P8	43–48	Female	2	Teacher	Large	Education
P9	23–30	Female	0	Hotel Manager	SME (Small)	Accommodation and Food Service
P10	31–36	Male	2	Factory Automation Officer	Large	Manufacturing
P11	43–48	Male	2	Director Deal Desk	Large	Information and Communication
P12	23–30	Female	0	Programme Officer	SME (Micro)	Education
P13	37–42	Male	1	Banking–Risk Function	Large	Financial and Insurance Activities
P14	55–60	Female	2	Nurse	Large	Human Health and Social Work Activities

Note: micro: less than 10 employees; small: 10–49; large: 250 or more.

Table 2. Key themes.

	Theme	Subtheme
1.	Employees	i. Striking a work–life balance ii. Fitting a five-day workload into four days
2.	Organisation	i. Enhancing job satisfaction and retention ii. Conditional feasibility across industries
3.	Wider system	i. Financial and operational dilemmas ii. Top-down implementation and governmental support

3.1. Theme 1: Employees

Most participants agreed that working four days a week could help employees reconcile work with family commitments, easing work-related stress and enhancing overall well-being. The following two subthemes capture respondents' perceptions about how the 4DWW could promote a work–life balance and well-being but also discuss concerns voiced by some respondents about the potential implications of "compressing a full week into 4 days".

i. Striking a Work–Life Balance

Participants suggested that the extra day off work would allow them the time and flexibility to effectively manage busy schedules and respond to multiple, and often competing, commitments associated with managing work and family responsibilities. Four-day working was seen as a way to alleviate some of the tension between personal and professional roles, provide more opportunities for meaningful family interactions, and help people to achieve a better work–life balance. Working parents commented on the potential financial gains from reduced childcare costs and reductions in stress associated with balancing work around school schedules. One participant described how a 4DWW might allow them to spend more quality time with their children, particularly on activities that would otherwise be 'crammed' into the weekends.

> "*There could be benefits in accommodating family and personal commitments, such as additional time for children's activities or other interests. Having an extra day off could allow me to shift weekend activities and have more quality time with the family*." (P5. Female, University Academic)

Most respondents saw some potential for a 4DWW to support their overall well-being. They believed that the extra day off could alleviate some of the stresses of a fast-paced lifestyle and provide opportunities for detachment from work, physical or mental rest, and personal growth. It was envisaged that the extra time could be actively invested in self-care or leisure activities that promote physical and mental health, which could ultimately enhance their productivity when back at work:

> "*A lot of the employees would have more time for spending time with the families, doing their personal activities or as simple as I think taking rest which can definitely improve their mental and physical well-being for sure*." (P13. Male, Banking–Risk Function)

ii. "Fitting a five-day workload into four days"

Some respondents drew a distinction between reduced and compressed working hours and commented on the implications of attempting to fit a five-day workload into four days. There were concerns that reducing the working hours without adjusting performance and productivity requirements could lead to the intensification of demand and effort, potentially offsetting the benefits of the extra day off. The risk of workload compression

was highlighted, especially in industries like hospitality, where job demands often extend beyond regular hours, as well as roles which involve working towards tight deadlines. Participants alluded to the challenges of time management with a 4DWW, and the possible impacts of this on their well-being. Some of the participants were sceptical about employees being able maintain the same level of productivity under a 4DWW, arguing that the compressed schedule might compromise the quality of outputs across the workforce and increase the risk of stress and burnout for employees.

> "*You will also have one less working day, so technically all your workload for that week needs to be squeezed in in that four-day cycle and you won't get as much breathing space that you do when you work every day*." (P6. Male, Market Insight Officer)

3.2. Theme 2: Organisation

With regard to implications for the wider organisation/company level, respondents mainly discussed the favourable effects of a 4DWW on staff satisfaction and turnover. This theme also underscored the challenges faced in sectors where operations must continue uninterrupted, and work cannot be easily deferred or rescheduled without compromising productivity and client satisfaction.

i. Enhancing job satisfaction and retention

It was suggested that a 4DWW model might contribute towards improving job satisfaction, with employees feeling more valued and appreciated. One participant shared their experience of a "Free Fridays" initiative at their company, which involved employees having an extra day off during a certain time of the year. In addition to providing a much-needed break for employees, it was also seen as a way to maintain high staff morale and engagement and improve workplace culture.

> "*In August, we have free Fridays, a benefit given to all employees of our company. So that's a four-day workweek. I like the four-day workweek because you get a longer period of the weekend to wind down, spend some more time with your family and do some things for yourself*." (P11. Male, Director)

Participants thought a 4DWW could have a positive impact on staff recruitment and retention. As an avenue to achieving a better work–life balance, the 4DWW could make companies more appealing for both current and prospective employees, especially in sectors where work-related stress is common, such as education, healthcare, and manufacturing. In a competitive job market, companies offering a 4DWW might gain an advantage in attracting, recruiting, and retaining talent. This was seen to be particularly important among young professionals who may have greater expectations of their employers and a desire for job roles that support a work–life balance and enhance their well-being. The 4DWW was seen to be more likely to attract and retain working parents, as well as professionals in roles perceived to be high stress and often associated with high turnover, such as teaching, nursing, and social work.

> "*If it's only four days' work a week, probably that could attract people to get into this profession as well because we also have a great difficulty with the retention rate of teachers*." (P8. Female, Teacher)

ii. Conditional Feasibility Across Industries

Despite the overarching optimism, some respondents voiced concerns about the practicality and feasibility of implementing a 4DWW in their respective fields. They argued that the viability and adaptability of a 4DWW are highly context-dependent and variable across job roles and industries. The adoption of a 4DWW was perceived to be less complicated in certain office-based or administrative roles where tasks can be managed

with greater flexibility. However, it was recognised that the success of the initiative relies on the interplay of multiple factors that need to be considered. For instance, one respondent commented that the volume of workload is highly seasonal in university administration, and while a 4DWW might work well during quieter periods, it could become a strain during peak times when events and student activities are in 'full swing'.

> "*In quieter periods, a four-day week seems feasible, but during peak times, it would be a struggle to keep up with everything*." (P12. Female, Programme Officer)

Participants also spoke of the challenges in coordinating work across different schedules, which could be particularly problematic in job roles where rapid communication and collaboration with clients or colleagues are crucial. For instance, in fields like aerospace manufacturing, where schedules are tightly managed across multiple teams and locations, a 4DWW might disrupt workflows and reduce efficiency.

> "*In aerospace manufacturing, where we have ongoing production, reducing the workweek would be nearly impossible without affecting outputs*." (P3. Female, Manufacturing Engineer)

The challenge of maintaining global coordination was noted by participants who liaised with international partners as part of their role. This related to difficulties in synchronising with colleagues across different time zones and different workweek models, which was seen to be high risk for miscommunication and possible delays in project completion. In industries requiring continuous operations or client-facing tasks, consistent staffing levels are needed to ensure that services or production lines run smoothly. Respondents questioned the feasibility of enacting a 4DWW without reducing employees' workload or compromising on productivity and/or client satisfaction. As one example, in finance and law, a 4DWW could disrupt the flow of work, leading to missed deadlines and frustration on both sides:

> "*There will be a strong pressure to meet those client deadlines by working that extra day while the clients are working for five days*." (P7. Female, Financial Conduct Authority)

3.3. Theme 3: Wider System Factors

This theme captures the wider financial and system implications that respondents considered when reflecting on how a 4DWW could be implemented at scale. Concerns were voiced about the financial viability of 4DWW models, especially within the current economic climate. They also highlighted the need for strong leadership and governmental support through appropriate policy frameworks.

i. Financial and Operational Dilemmas

The financial and operational implications of a 4DWW was a common theme in respondents' accounts. According to some respondents, not all companies would be able to maintain existing salary levels while reducing the number of workdays. This could be a particular issue for micro-small and small businesses with tight profit margins. It was feared that a reduced workweek could lead to lower incomes for some employees, especially in industries such as hospitality, where wages are often tied to the number of hours worked. Concerns were also voiced that the 4DWW might compromise operational efficiency; organisations may struggle to sustain the same level of output with fewer workdays without incurring additional costs, such as hiring more staff or investing in automation.

> "*If you think about it from a business perspective, with a four-day week is that we will pay the same amount of money but only get four days. So, the cost implication is quite significant*." (P14. Female, Nurse)

ii. Top-Down Implementation and Governmental Support

Most respondents agreed that the transition to a 4DWW should be driven by senior management within organisations or initiated at a governmental level. They felt that such a significant change requires a top-down approach and highlighted the important role that the government could play in facilitating the shift to a 4DWW. This might be achieved through legislation, incentives, or clear policy guidelines. Without governmental support, organisations might be reluctant to adopt a 4DWW due to worries about competitiveness, cost implications, and the potential for the unequal adoption of 4DWW policies across industries. It was suggested that government incentives or subsidies could encourage companies to experiment with a 4DWW without bearing the full financial risk.

> "*For companies to take this seriously, the government needs to be involved, either through legislation or incentives. Otherwise, it's just too risky for many businesses to try on their own*." (P11. Male, Director)

4. Discussion

The exploration of employee perspectives on the four-day workweek (4DWW) within this study revealed a nuanced understanding of both the opportunities and the challenges associated with its implementation across various roles and industries in the UK. Respondents identified benefits for work–life balance and increased job satisfaction but also raised concerns about the practicality of compressing workloads into fewer days, particularly in roles requiring continuous operations.

In this study, employees' views towards the 4DWW depended to some extent on their perceptions of whether the 4DWW relates to compressed hours (i.e., where employees typically work four longer days as part of a 4-day, full-time workweek), or a reduction in working hours (where employees work four standard days and receive reduced or the same pay. However, the 4DWW was generally viewed to offer greater flexibility for employees with family and caregiving responsibilities. Participants, and working parents in particular, emphasised how an additional day off could promote meaningful family interactions and the better management of competing commitments. This aligns with previous research which identified benefits for employees' personal and family life (Ashford & Kallis, 2013; Kelly et al., 2022). Importantly, in this study, the reported benefits extended beyond a reduction in work time and towards achieving a better work–life balance. Conceptually, this aligns with the 'Spill-Over' theory of work–life balance, which purports that contentment and accomplishment in one field may bring about contentment and accomplishment in another field and vice versa (Xu, 2009).

Reduced working hours have been linked to improvements in mental health and overall life satisfaction (Kelly et al., 2022; Pedersen et al., 2024). A report published by Lewis et al. (2023) noted that, by the end of the 4DWW trial in the UK, 39% of employees experienced reduced stress, and 71% reported lower levels of burnout. Additionally, there were decreases in anxiety, fatigue, and sleep issues, alongside improvements in both mental and physical health. It has been suggested that reduced working hours may also help nurture a feeling of control over personal life, making it easier to meet personal needs and demands (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Almantaite, 2024). Our participants' accounts further reinforce the potential value of the 4DWW for enhancing employees' quality of life, highlighting its appeal as a means of supporting work–life balance. As such, the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 2002) also provides a useful lens through which to interpret our findings, since the perceived flexible work option afforded by the 4DWW could be viewed as a resource for employees, which supports them in attaining their work (and life) goals.

Our findings suggest that the 4DWW was often seen as a strategic tool for improving job satisfaction and reducing the high costs associated with employee turnover, particularly in sectors with reported high levels of work-related stress, such as healthcare, higher education, and banking. This aligns with recent evidence highlighting the value of the 4DWW in reducing work-related stress, enhancing balance at work and increasing job satisfaction in nurse leaders working in a specialist cancer care centre (Gilliland et al., 2025). Positive outcomes, including improved productivity, increased job satisfaction, and reduced turnover and absenteeism, have been reported in the literature (Hartman & Weaver, 1977; Campbell, 2024; Almantaite, 2024). Our participants suggested that the extra day off and the promise of a better work–life balance could make companies more attractive to both current and prospective employees and offer a competitive advantage in recruiting new talent. Contemporary workforce studies have identified a shift in workplace expectations and a growing trend among Generation Z and Millennials towards prioritising a work–life balance over traditional markers of job success, such as monetary compensation or career advancement (The Deloitte Global 2024 Gen Z and Millennial Survey, 2024; Brown, 2023; Kling, 2023; Mikhlina, 2021). Younger generations may increasingly seek flexibility and autonomy in their work arrangements, which might have implications for employees' attitudes towards 4DWW models. Our qualitative design and small sample size did not allow us to explore the influence of age; future research could examine whether there are generational differences in attitudes towards working the 4DWW.

A key concern for our respondents was the risk of increased workload pressure. Participants feared that compressing the workweek into four days could lead to longer, more intense workdays, ultimately negating the benefits of the extra day off. While a shorter workweek can reduce overall working hours, it may simultaneously increase the daily workload, leading to higher levels of stress and burnout, particularly in high-demand roles (Campbell, 2024; Tessema et al., 2023; Harter, 2023). According to our respondents, when roles require consistent daily engagement (e.g., teachers, bankers, healthcare, and managers), compressing the workweek might elevate stress rather than alleviate it. This underscores the challenge of implementing a 4DWW without increasingly the daily workload, especially when the pace of work is already intense. For the 4DWW to be viable, organisations may need to carefully consider how to redistribute workloads without overburdening employees.

The impact on productivity and client satisfaction was also discussed, particularly in the context of sectors that require effective coordination and communication across multiple stakeholders nationally and internationally (Kallis et al., 2013; Campbell, 2024). The risk of misalignment between employees working a 4DWW and those on traditional schedules could lead to bottlenecks in workflow, ultimately undermining the effectiveness of the 4DWW. The cost implications of hiring additional staff or investing in automation to compensate for the reduced workweek were also highlighted as potential barriers to adoption. While the 4DWW might support organisational cost savings through reduced absenteeism and increased productivity, the initial investment required for successful adoption might be substantial, particularly for small businesses (Lesné et al., 2024).

As discussed by some of our respondents, the 4DWW model might be easier to implement for office-based or administrative roles. Tasks in these environments can often be managed with greater flexibility and employees may restructure their workflows to accommodate a shorter workweek and a reduced timeframe. The ability to flexibly manage tasks and adjust deadlines was seen as key to making the 4DWW a viable and sustainable option.

Participants recognised the importance of leadership in driving organisational change and argued that for the 4DWW to be effectively implemented, strong backing from senior management would be required and potentially a mandate through government legislation.

This finding is consistent with research indicating that organisational change is most successful when led by strong leadership and supported by clear policy frameworks (Seo et al., 2012; Zainol et al., 2021). Japan's initiatives to promote flexible working arrangements, including the adoption of a 4DWW as part of broader work style reforms, underscore this point. Several companies in Japan, such as Microsoft and Panasonic, piloted four-day workweeks for their employees in 2019 and 2022, respectively. Additionally, other companies like Mizuho Bank and Cross River have permanently implemented the 4DWW. This suggests that when a government or country spearheads such initiatives, it facilitates broader acceptance and success (Smith, 2023). According to our respondents, without strong leadership support, efforts to transition to a 4DWW might falter due to a lack of coherent strategy and commitment across various levels of the organisation.

4.1. Study Strengths and Limitations

The findings of this study largely align with the existing literature on the 4DWW, and its benefits for mental health, employee satisfaction, and enhanced work–life balance. Our study contributes new insights into the specific challenges associated with the 4DWW, such as increased workload pressure, coordination issues, and financial concerns. While the 4DWW offers significant potential, its implementation must be carefully managed to mitigate the risks and maximise the benefits.

The diversity of our sample permitted the exploration of the 4DWW impact on different industries, from office-based roles to sectors requiring continuous operations like healthcare and manufacturing. The variety in perspectives provides rich insights and supports the transferability of our findings to a wider audience. The study's findings are not limited to a single industry or job type but instead could inform policies and practises across the board and provide a resource for both researchers and practitioners.

The qualitative nature of this research facilitated a nuanced exploration of employees' opinions and experiences and helped identify the contextual influences on implementation. This study contributes to the broader discourse on work–life balance and flexible working arrangements, informing future research and policymaking. By focusing on the perspectives of employees, this study sheds light on the human aspect of organisational change, reminding policymakers and business leaders that any shift towards a 4DWW must consider the diverse needs and concerns of the workforce.

Our small sample size may have limited the comprehensive exploration of some themes and the diversity of experiences and opinions within each industry or job role. This study focuses solely on the perspectives of men and women and does not include the views of individuals with other gender identities. The opinions of minority groups or less common job roles may be underrepresented. Finally, our findings are context-specific and may not be directly applicable to other cultural or economic environments. The experiences and opinions of employees in the UK, with its unique labour market, legal framework, and work culture, may differ from those in other countries.

4.2. Implications for Research and Practice

A key recommendation from this study is that organisations could consider offering flexible work options which are tailored to specific industry needs. Regarding future research, qualitative studies involving larger and more diverse samples could provide further insights into the specific needs and concerns of different demographic groups, such as individuals with caregiving responsibilities and members of the LGBTQIA community, to inform adaptations and ensure 4DWW models meet the diverse needs of the workforce. Future research could explore how pre-existing attitudes and expectations align with actual experiences once a 4DWW is implemented. Comparative studies will be needed

to investigate whether the anticipated benefits, such as improved work–life balance and mental well-being, are realised in practice, and whether the concerns raised, such as increased workload pressure, manifest during implementation. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the 4DWW's impact over time, offering valuable insights into its long-term effectiveness and sustainability. Going forward, the role of government policies in facilitating the transition to a 4DWW should also be examined to understand how legislative frameworks and incentives may support businesses in adopting this new work model. Studies exploring the impact of the 4DWW on organisational retention, turnover, and revenue would provide valuable insights.

5. Conclusions

Worldwide, there is a growing interest in the 4DWW, which is likely driven by the increasing demand for flexible work arrangements over recent years. Our study contributes to the existing body of evidence by offering a qualitative exploration of employee perspectives on the 4DWW across various industries in the UK. While much of the current literature focuses on quantitative assessments or case studies within specific sectors that have already adopted the 4DWW, there has been a lack of research capturing the nuanced views of employees who are still working within traditional five-day structures. This study addresses that gap by providing rich, detailed insights into the perceived benefits and challenges of transitioning to a 4DWW, as expressed by employees from diverse roles and industries. Future research should further investigate these evolving dynamics and evaluate the long-term effects of the 4DWW across various cultural and economic contexts to fully realise its potential benefits. This study lays the groundwork for a more comprehensive understanding of the 4DWW and its potential implications across different global contexts and settings.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

4DWW	Four-day workweek

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