BEYOND THE FIFTH DAY

UNRAVELING HOW VARIOUS HIGH-ACHIEVING JOB SEEKERS PERCEIVE A FOUR DAY WORK WEEK

MARCUS LINNARSSON

HAMPUS MÅNSSON

Bachelor Thesis

Stockholm School of Economics

2024

Beyond the fifth day - Unraveling how various high-achieving job seekers perceive a four day work week

Abstract:

The discourse on the 4DWW is growing, praised for its potential to enhance work-life balance, yet lingering uncertainties persist regarding its perception among job seekers. Therefore, utilizing a qualitative approach and adopting an interpretive paradigm, this thesis aims to understand the perceptions of high-achieving soon-to-be graduates from various academic backgrounds in regard to the 4DWW. The study comprises 13 interviews, including one pilot interview, with participants evenly distributed between male and female cohorts across two distinct research groups: students from the Business & Economics program at the Stockholm School of Economics and the Computer Science Engineering program at The Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. The study employs the Expectancy Value Model of Motivated Behavioral Choice, chosen for its capacity to consider identity as a significant determinant in individuals' decision-making processes and its effectiveness in enhancing comprehension of occupational choices. The research findings underscore the significant variations in perceptions of the 4DWW, influenced by factors including an individual's field of work, career aspirations, educational institution, and value of leisure time. These factors were intricately intertwined with the formation of identity and were observed to be significantly influenced by identity, thereby demonstrating a profound impact on the perception of 4DWW. Furthermore, a prevailing concern among high-achieving soon-to-be graduates was that a 4DWW might hinder competence building which was especially worrisome early on in their career. Moreover, a unified positive sentiment towards the 4DWW was noted in relation to its appeal later in life, particularly as individuals assume increased family responsibilities.

Keywords: Four Day Work Week (4DWW), Flexible Work Practices (FWP), Expectancy Value model, High-achieving job seekers, Soon-to-be graduates

Authors:

Marcus Linnarsson (25294)

Hampus Månsson (25230)

Supervisor:

Anna Söderblom, Affiliated Researcher, Department of Management and Organization

Examiner:

Laurence Romani, Professor, Department of Management and Organization

Bachelor Thesis
Bachelor Program in Management
Stockholm School of Economics

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Acknowledgments

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the research participants from SSE and KTH. Your time and dedication to contributing to this study are deeply appreciated. We also wish to express our sincere appreciation to our supervisor, Anna Söderblom, for her invaluable insights and unwavering support throughout this endeavor. Additionally, we would like to thank our peers in our supervision group for their consistent encouragement and insightful feedback. Special thanks are also due to SSE for fostering a conducive learning environment, and to our course director Laurence Romani, who has provided us with a safe space for learning and discovery, for which we are immensely grateful.

Marcus & Hampus

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Executive Summary

As the 4DWW garners growing attention from various sectors including companies, governments, and individuals, it becomes imperative to delve deeper into this topic. Therefore, this Bachelor's thesis aims to investigate high-achieving soon-to-be graduates' perceptions of the 4DWW in Sweden. More specifically, the research entails interviews with students from the top programs in business and computer science in Sweden, namely the Business & Economics program at SSE and the Computer Science Engineering program at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. To understand the perceptions among students lacking prior exposure to the 4DWW, Eccles' (2009) Expectancy-Value Model of Motivated Behavioral Choice was chosen in order to understand the expectations that drive the perceptions of these individuals. Furthermore, the study has taken on the interpretive paradigm in order to understand underlying contexts on a deeper, more subjective level. This was done by conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the majority of participants and further thematically analyzing the data.

Analysis of the data showed vastly different responses and perceptions of the 4DWW between the two groups of students. On a more superficial level, our empirical evidence can support that there is a significant difference between perceptions of the 4DWW for students with a business background and those with a tech background. However, there are several mediating factors that affect the perceptions beyond the major of the individual, for example, the institution of education, career aspirations, and the value of leisure time. Additionally, both groups were more aligned on certain factors, such as the concern regarding competence development within the 4DWW. Moreover, unanimous agreement was observed on the attractiveness of the 4DWW as a future option when individuals have more family obligations. Both these factors indicate what perhaps can be viewed as common beliefs among soon-to-be graduates regarding the 4DWW.

Our findings indicate that this study has implications not only for those considering or already implementing the 4DWW, but also for companies seeking to understand the perceptions of job seekers with backgrounds in both business and computer science. As companies increasingly require a blend of tech and business expertise, comprehending the distinctions between various types of recruits could optimize the recruiting process.

Moreover, this study may have significant implications for companies considering the implementation of the 4DWW. Our findings can support that certain sectors or industries may be more adept at attracting high-skill talent if they decide to implement a 4DWW. This insight could serve as a crucial determinant in the decision-making process regarding the adoption of the 4DWW, given the pivotal role of talent attraction in a company's success. Additionally, our study holds particular relevance for those interested in hiring soon-to-be graduates, as it suggests potential challenges in this process compared to hiring individuals at other life stages. Therefore, proactive measures may be necessary within a company's recruiting strategies in order to address these difficulties among soon-to-be graduates. Thus this study

can help these companies to align with the preferences and expectations of potential recruits, and thus enhance their competitiveness and overall performance in the marketplace.

Additionally, this study serves as a valuable resource for companies already implementing the 4DWW, offering insights into potential organizational strategies for altering perceptions or refining brand management practices. By identifying the primary concerns of job seekers and soon-to-be graduates regarding the 4DWW, this study equips these companies with the information needed to make adjustments in information distribution about the 4DWW and in brand management. This could involve finding strategies to address the worry of competence development within the 4DWW for soon-to-be graduates, which could minimize worries among this demographic and improve their talent attraction strategy.

As far as academia is concerned this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on flexible work practices and alternative work arrangements by incorporating insights about the 4DWW into the literature. Additionally, it addresses the research gap concerning the types of individuals and talent attracted to the 4DWW, as well as the perception of the 4DWW from a non-practitioner standpoint. Consequently, this study has the potential to enrich the academic literature on the topic of 4DWW, thereby overcoming the limitations identified in previous studies that have highlighted the scarcity of literature on this subject as a problem. Thus, our study can serve as a catalyst for further research in this area. This aspect also holds significant value for advocacy groups like Four Day Work Week Global, who conduct their own studies and engage with independent studies in order to expand knowledge surrounding the 4DWW.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

“Your children will live to 100 [...] *and will probably be working three and half days a week.”*

JPMorgan Chase & Co. CEO Jamie Dimon

This was said in regard to his anticipation of how AI will revolutionize our society (Dimon, 2023). That being said, the rapid advancement of AI technologies has propelled the belief that a shorter workweek is inevitable in the eyes of many (Bennett, 2024; Taub & Levitt, 2023). AI has played a pivotal role in legitimizing the concept of the four-day work week (4DWW) (Tech.co, 2024), a concept which has witnessed substantial growth in public interest as an alternative flexible work practice (FWP), with a 4DWW pilot program planned for the end of 2024 in Sweden (Palm, 2024). The distinctive feature of the 4DWW movement lies in its advocacy for employees to maintain full pay (100%) while working fewer hours (80%), yet maintaining productivity at (100%) (4 Day Week Global, n.d.).

The adoption of the 4DWW has garnered widespread praise among those who have implemented it, eliciting positive sentiments from stakeholders at three distinct levels. In the world's largest 4DWW pilot employees voiced overwhelmingly high approval of the practice, citing increased well-being and work-life balance which was in large part due to reduced levels of stress and anxiety (Autonomy team et al., 2023; Fleck, 2022). While on an organizational level, company managers recognized the value of the practice, with a majority eager to continue its implementation beyond trial periods, citing positive results in regards to reduced turnover but also being able to maintain productivity. Furthermore, research suggests that the 4DWW holds promise for addressing workplace inequalities from a social policy perspective, by allowing for better adaptation of domestic work to worklife which could especially help women, adding to its attractiveness for companies (Chung 2022).

In the infancy of the 4DWW, it has also been praised in the media as a tool to attract top-tier talent (Knowles, 2024; Kratz, 2024; Meshcheryakov, 2022). As an increasing number of enterprises acknowledge the pivotal role played by the talents and competencies of their workforce in shaping organizational success, the formulation of strategies aimed at attracting prospective employees has assumed paramount importance (Khatri et al., 2010). The competition for attracting top candidates in the job market is often referred to as the "war for talent", where failure to effectively compete for these highly skilled individuals may be detrimental to an organization (Michaels et al., 2001).

From the viewpoint of job seekers, anecdotal evidence suggests a significant increase in job applications, indicating the success of the 4DWW as a talent attraction tool (Kiderlin, 2022; Lööf, 2017). However, ambiguity persists regarding the specific type of talent 4DWW

appeals to and perceptions among those unfamiliar with the practice. While the 4DWW is often touted as a means to attract high-skilled workers, there exists a potential contradiction with the traits typically associated with high-achieving students. This includes traits such as a predisposition to work longer hours (Miao, 2023), as well as the offering of highly prestigious and well-paying jobs in time-consuming, fiercely competitive industries (Binder, Davis, & Bloom, 2016). Therefore, examining the perceptions of high-achieving soon-to-be graduates regarding the 4DWW, particularly regarding potential trade-offs such as career progression, compensation, and other FWPs, will be crucial for understanding the effectiveness of the 4DWW as a talent attraction strategy for this type of person.

1.2. Research Gap

There is literature regarding FWP effects on application attraction and the perception of alternative work arrangements (Ashford, George, & Blatt, 2007; Spreitzer, Cameron, & Garrett, 2017; Rau & Hyland, 2002), however, little attention has been given to exploring the potential impact of a 4DWW within this body of research. The oversight in previous FWP literature regarding the role of 4DWW in job attraction can in part be attributed to the novelty of the topic.

Within the existing research on the 4DWW, emphasis has predominantly been placed on gauging the experiences of current employees with the practice (Campbell, 2023), while comparatively less attention has been devoted to understanding the perspective of job seekers regarding this arrangement. Quantitative data, which predominantly relies on questionnaire responses in a non-academic setting, has provided insights into the perceived attractiveness of the 4DWW from a jobseeker standpoint, along with indications of various factors influencing its appeal (Briggs, 2023). However, there is limited understanding regarding the underlying reasons for these perceptions as well as the motivation and expectancy of job seekers, which in part is due to the lack of qualitative research. It is thus imperative to utilize a qualitative methodology, as it provides highly contextualized data which is necessary in order to open the black box (Saunders et al., 2019, p.639).

1.3. Aim and Research Question

This study aims to investigate the perception of various high-achieving soon-to-be graduates in regard to working a 4DWW. The main purpose of the study is to add to the already existing field of FWP and its effects on job attraction. Developing insights into the nuances and implications of 4DWW from a job seeker perspective is of considerable interest to companies who are interested in adopting a 4DWW to attract high-skilled workers.

The choice of researching the perspective of various high-achieving soon-to-be graduates is motivated by evidence suggesting that graduates from esteemed institutions outperform their counterparts from less renowned universities and receive higher average salaries (Taras et al., 2020). This suggests that these graduates may be perceived as high-skilled workers, which companies strive to attract.

Given the potential of the 4DWW to redefine the workplace, it is essential to explore and understand all aspects of its impact thoroughly. More importantly, there is little known about the identities and expectations of job seekers when considering a 4DWW. Therefore, delving into the perceptions of high-achieving soon-to-be-graduates regarding 4DWW using Eccles et al. (2009) Expectancy-Value Model of Motivated Behavioral Choice could provide insights into the viability of the 4DWW as a talent attraction strategy.

This study aims to answer the following research question:

"How do soon-to-be graduates from various high-achieving academic backgrounds perceive the offering of a 4-day workweek when considering potential job opportunities?"

1.4. Delimitation

The study narrows its focus to the Swedish labor market due to the significant diversity in perspectives on work-life balance and working hours worldwide (OECD, n.d). Additionally, Sweden serves as a promising case study due to its reputation as a country known for its excellent work-life balance and significant emphasis on this aspect in society (Pratt, 2023).

The sample of this study consists of students studying at the Bachelor program in Business & Economics at the Stockholm School of Economics (SSE) and the program in Computer Science Engineering at the Royal Institute of Technology Stockholm (KTH). Further on in the study, these two groups will be denoted as SSE students and computer science students, respectively.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Attracting Talent through Flexible Work Practices

With organizations recognizing the critical role of talent in driving success, there's a heightened focus on strategies to attract prospective employees (Khatri et al., 2010). Among these strategies, FWPs have emerged as a notable tool for talent attraction (Thompson et al., 2015). Meta-analytical findings from a comprehensive review of 68 FWP-related studies corroborate that offering FWPs effectively entices prospective employees (Onken-Menke, Nüesch, & Kröll, 2018).

Within most studies on FWPs, it is commonly conceptualized as work arrangements that provide employment relationship flexibility (part-time), Work scheduling flexibility (flexitime) or location of work flexibility (hybrid/remote) (Onken-Menke, Nüesch, & Kröll, 2018; Rau & Hyland, 2002; Ashford, George, & Blatt, 2007; Spreitzer, Cameron, & Garrett, 2017; Thompson et al., 2015). Thus, the existing FWP literature overlooks the aspect of employees' pay remaining intact at 100% despite experiencing a "meaningful" reduction in

work time, a core tenet of the 4DWW. Consequently, there is a need to broaden the research on FWPs' connection to talent attraction by examining the impact of the 4DWW on job seekers.

2.2. Four-Day Workweek

2.2.1 What is a 4DWW

Since the 4DWW's inception in 2018, the advocacy group Four Day Work Week Global has played a pivotal role in numerous renowned pilot programs worldwide in recent years (Veal, 2023). The studies conducted in partnership with Four Day Work Week Global, are encouraged to adopt the 100-80-100™ principle (Autonomy team et al., 2023; Campbell, 2023; Veal, 2023) which entails receiving full pay (100%) for working reduced hours (80%) while maintaining a commitment to delivering full productivity (100%) (4 Day Week Global, n.d.). Thus the newly devised four-day, 32-hour work week is different from the compressed work week where an individual completes their traditional hours (40) in a shorter space of time (four days) known as 4/40 (Leslie et al., 2012). While advocacy groups' reports and media often portray a largely optimistic view of the 4DWW, a literature review drawing from 31 academic articles suggests a more nuanced and ambiguous reality than is commonly depicted (Campbell, 2023).

2.2.2 4DWW from a Social Perspective

Those limited to working at 80% capacity often resort to part-time roles, resulting in lower pay than full-time positions. This disproportionately affects women's career advancement, exacerbating disparities and marginalization within the workplace, as flexible workers are perceived to generate additional work for others (Chung, 2020). In a recent conceptual study, it is posited that adopting a 4DWW could have the capabilities of reducing gender inequality in the labor market and enhancing worker well-being (Chung 2022). This is significant because it can impact the appeal of adopting a 4DWW, especially in relation to the perception of the practice based on gender. Additionally, a questionnaire conducted in Sweden by Randstad showed that women were generally more positive toward the prospect of a 4DWW compared to men (Jakobsen, 2023).

2.2.3 Employers' Experiences of 4DWW

From the perspective of employers, advantages such as reduced absenteeism, enhanced recruitment, decreased turnover, and even creating cost savings in regard to office resources such as electricity costs, have emerged as notable benefits of the 4DWW (Campbell, 2023; Veal, 2023). However, due to limited research, the primary interest from the employee perspective arises from studies conducted by advocacy groups such as Four Day Work Week Global. Four Day Work Week Global conducted the largest pilot program of the 4DWW in

the world in the UK in 2022 across various sectors. The study revealed that a majority of consulted managers expressed a strong inclination to continue the 4DWW beyond the study period (Autonomy team et al., 2023; Fleck, 2022). Nevertheless, a primary concern among employers is the perceived costliness of the practice and the uncertainty surrounding the necessary productivity increase to sustain it (Veal, 2023). Moreover, a critical concern revolves around the sustainability of the 4DWW for small enterprises, particularly regarding their ability to maintain profitability and operational viability on a smaller scale (Moen & Chu, 2023).

2.2.4 Employee Perspective of 4DWW

Numerous researchers have indicated a positive correlation between the 4DWW and enhanced employee well-being and job satisfaction (Campbell, 2023; Ashford & Kallis, 2013; Veal, 2023). Additionally, the renowned UK study by Four Day Work Week revealed the two most significant factors from an employee perspective being the increase in well-being and work-life balance (Autonomy team et al., 2023). Nonetheless, additional literature argues that one should be more critical towards some of these positive notions, as conventional managerial practices concerning performance management, monitoring, and productivity metrics were heightened with the 4DWW (Delaney & Casey, 2022). Additionally, intensified performance monitoring, scheduling challenges, and potential diminishing benefits over time, with the effects on productivity and the environment remaining uncertain, were also included as drawbacks in a larger literature review on the 4DWW (Campbell, 2023).

The attractiveness of a 4DWW from an employee/jobseeker perspective can also potentially be influenced by the socio-political environment concerning work-life balance, a factor that varies significantly across different regions globally. Sweden ranks third according to Forbes' work-life balance index and is among the top ten countries with the least working hours according to the OECD (OECD, n.d.; Pratt, 2023). This would suggest that the demand for work-life balance in the Swedish job market aligns with what the 4DWW can offer. However, regardless of the country, there is a potential contradiction between the competencies typically associated with individuals holding advanced education and the 4DWW. As admission to prestigious universities often requires exceptional academic performance, which research suggests correlates closely with time invested in studying (Miao, 2023). Consequently, given the structure of our present educational system, efforts to attract candidates to the 4DWW whose primary advantage lies in their capacity for extensive time investment relative to their peers might be ineffective.

Furthermore, research has revealed an observed effect on students attending elite universities, commonly referred to by sociologists as “career funneling”, which is where elite universities' student cultures and campus structure quickly teach students what to be regarded as the most prestigious career alternatives (Binder, Davis, & Bloom, 2016). The study presents that career funneling channels these students into three predominant career trajectories, namely high-tech, finance, and consulting, indicating its potential impact on both groups of this study. However, existing literature highlights a gap in comprehension of how the career funneling

dynamics of the "Big Tech pathway" compare with other pathways, particularly in the context of computer science students (Cui, 2020). It is underscored that career funneling varies in effect depending on major and that the rejection of traditional career funneling by computer science students is influenced by challenges to Big Tech's legitimacy on a broader societal scale and pre-college socialization.

2.3. Literature Summary

The literature review provides valuable insights into the impacts of the 4DWW on employees, employers, and societal dynamics. However, there is a notable gap in understanding the implications of the 4DWW on job attractiveness, particularly regarding job seekers' expectations for or against it. Additionally, the literature indicates potential differences between computer science students' work perception compared to other groups, highlighting a crucial area for future research and methodological consideration in this study.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Expectancy-Value Model of Motivated Behavioral Choice

Contemporary expectancy-value models trace their roots back to Atkinson's seminal work from 1957 and 1964, which introduced his expectancy-value theory linking individual choices to perceived task value and expectancy-based notions (Wigfield, Tonks, & Klauda, 2009). In 1983 Eccles et al. developed what can be described as situated expectancy theory which takes into consideration the impact of different personal, social, cultural, and situational factors (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020). What distinguishes Eccles' model is its enhanced complexity, which was further developed in a paper from 2009, which coined the Expectancy-Value Model of Motivated Behavioral Choice, which includes identity as a central mediator (Eccles et al., 2009).

3.1.1 Identity

Eccles et al. (2009) proposes that identity comprises two primary types of self-perceptions, which collectively shape an individual's expectations for achievement and the value they assign to potential occupations: (1) perceptions of their skills, competencies, and characteristics, and (2) perceptions of their personal goals and values.

Furthermore, Eccles et al. (2009) differentiated between two different kinds of identities, one being the individual's personal identity and the other one being their collective identity. Personal and collective identities encompass the realms to which individuals belong, and it suggests that individuals use their choices to affirm these identities (ibid). While the boundary between personal and collective identity may be blurry, Eccles et al. (2009) offers a distinction: Personal identity fulfills the psychological role of instilling a sense of uniqueness within oneself, while collective identities represent those aspects of the self that are individually valued and foster connections to significant communities and relationships.

3.1.2 Expectations for Success

The perceived expectation for success is defined by the individual's conviction of their ability for success as well as personal efficacy related to the choice (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Therefore, it is proposed that individuals tend to select activities, behaviors, or tasks where they anticipate the highest likelihood of success. Furthermore, Eccles et al (2009) argue that a person's intraindividual hierarchy of success expectations drives their choices. Within this hierarchy, key factors influencing a person's expectation of success include their self-concept and perception of task difficulty. The self-concept refers to an individual's perception of their own competencies relative to others, which informs their assessment of task difficulty and subsequently impacts their belief in their ability to succeed (ibid).

3.1.3 Subjective Task Value

Eccles et al. (2009) define subjective task value as a task quality that influences an individual's likelihood of selecting it. Thus the choices individuals make in regards to occupation are influenced by the value they assign to the different achievement-related options, which is subjective as each individual gives the same action distinct value (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020; Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). The task quality depends on four distinct factors: a) interest value, b) attainment value, c) utility value, and d) perceived cost.

3.1.3.1 Interest Value

Interest value is linked to the level of enjoyment or interest an individual gains from a particular task (Wigfield, 1994). Moreover, it is suggested that interest value grows over time as competence in the task increases and the situational interest becomes internalized (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020). This heightened enjoyment can be attributed to classical conditioning, as competence in the task becomes integrated into the individual's self-concept and consequently becomes a part of their personal identity (Eccles et al., 2009).

3.1.3.2 Attainment Value

The attainment value is decided by the degree to which tasks enable or restrict a person from expressing actions that they consider essential to their sense of self (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). Eccles et al (2009) suggests that an individual's perspective on a career opportunity is likely shaped by aspects of their self-concept that hold significance in defining who they are. Consequently, when undertaking a task, individuals strive to validate certain qualities closely linked to their self-image, as well as their personal and collective identities which could include seeing oneself as hardworking or creative.

3.1.3.3 Utility Value

The distinction between utility value and attainment value may sometimes be challenging, yet utility value tends to align more closely with what is commonly referred to as extrinsic motivation, as it serves a goal that is less integral to the individual and is instead viewed as a means to an end (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020; Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). Nonetheless, it is

crucial to recognize that significant personal goals, such as obtaining a specific job, can also be perceived as a means to an end.

3.1.3.4 Perceived Cost

According to Eccles original 1983 research, there are three primary kinds of perceived costs with engaging in the task (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020; Wigfield & Eccles, 2020; Flake et al., 2015): the first one being *opportunity cost*, which is the amount of time or ability lost when completing a task; secondly, *effort cost*, which is the perceived amount of effort required to succeed in a task and if it is worthwhile; and thirdly *emotional cost*, pertains to the psychological or emotional toll incurred when undertaking a task, which encompasses concerns about fear of failure and anticipated anxiety associated with the task. However, Flake et al. (2015) argue that there is a shortcoming within how the cost component is evaluated, advocating for the inclusion of a fourth component known as the *outside effort cost*. This component attempts to capture the importance of life outside of a particular task and how there can be a perceived cost related to its hindrance. This factor was deemed essential to incorporate into the theory based on our empirical findings. It is important to note that the relative evaluation of these costs depends on how closely the activity aligns with one's personal and collective identities (Eccles et al., 2009).

3.2 Theory Critique

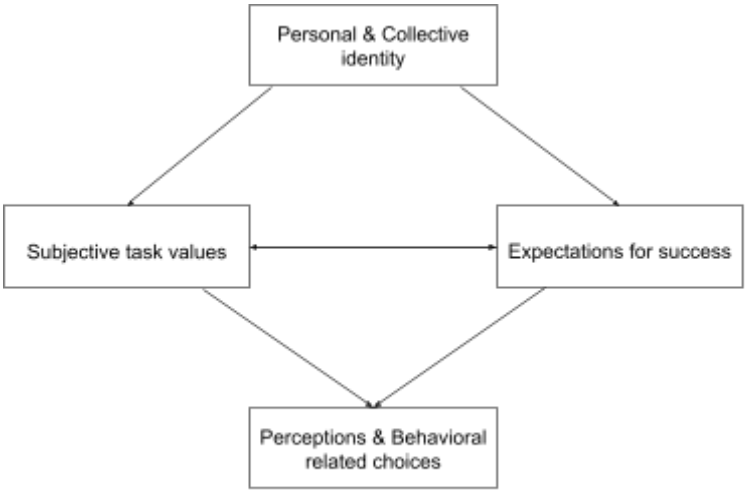
When utilizing the theory it is important to note that the various subjective task values are not always distinct entities, as they can evolve and intertwine over time (Eccles et al., 2009). For instance, a task initially valued for its enjoyment may evolve into being valued for its attainment value. Nonetheless, we have endeavored to differentiate the key aspects while harnessing the potential of their interconnectedness. The theory can also be criticized for lacking or failing to take into account and integrate people's information sources, which are connected to the process through which the individual learns to value certain activities while devaluing others (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020; Wigfield & Eccles, 2020).

3.3 Theory Usage

The Expectancy Value Model of Motivated Behavioral Choice proposed by Eccles et al. (2009) was deemed to be a fitting framework. The selection of this theory was predicated on its capacity to provide insights into the perceptions of high-achieving soon-to-be graduates regarding the incentives that may draw them to the 4DWW, as well as the potential deterrent factors associated with it. This was because the model considers the influence of personal and collective identities on individuals' expectations for success and subjective task values which was uncovered to play a significant role in the analysis of the empirics. Moreover, it is a theory aimed at improving the understanding of salient life-defining behavioral choices, one in particular being the choice of occupation (ibid). Therefore, we believe that this theory possesses significant explanatory power in addressing our research question and research aim.

The theory usage within the analysis will have its foundation in the traditional expectations-value theory of analyzing the subjective task values and expectations for success in order to understand the perceptions and behavior-related choices (Wigfield, 1994; Eccles et al., 2009; Eccles & Wigfield, 2020; Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). Personal and collective identity will serve as mediators for subjective task values and expectations of success, influencing each differently. Identity is thus integrated as a complement in analyzing these two main components (Eccles et al., 2009). See Table 3.1 for the simplified framework

Table 3.1. Theory Framework



3.4 Theory Summary

The Expectancy Value Model of Motivated Behavioral Choice is deemed appropriate due to its capacity to provide insight into individuals' expectations, thereby offering insights into their perceptual frameworks. Moreover, it incorporates considerations of personal and collective identities, which our empirical findings have identified as significant factors.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Stance

Considering the aim of this research paper, which is to explore the perceptions of 4DWW from diverse perspectives, a subjectivist ontology is deemed suitable. This is because subjectivist ontology asserts that social reality is constructed from the perceptions and subsequent actions of social actors (Saunders et al., 2019, p.137). Furthermore, this study will be taking a social constructionist approach within the subjectivist ontology, which posits that reality is constructed intersubjectively wherein social interactions produce shared meanings and realities (ibid). With these factors in mind, conducting the research from the interpretive paradigm perspective is of interest due to its inherent capability to uncover and explore

multiple subjectivities as well as its ability to create new, richer understandings of social worlds and contexts (Saunders et al., 2019, p.141).

4.2. Research Methodology

It is argued that a completely deductive or inductive approach is not only impractical but close to unfeasible to achieve, as a consequence a majority of management researchers utilize an abductive approach to some extent in their work (Saunders et al., 2019, p.156). Therefore, an abductive approach has been utilized in order to allow for incremental improvements and alterations, which is evidenced by the decision to change the theoretical framework based on the empirical data provided.

4.3. Research Design

This study utilizes cross-sectional semi-structured interviews, chosen for their effectiveness in exploring multifaceted and open-ended questions (Saunders et al., 2019, p.437-446). Furthermore, one-to-one interviews in a face-to-face setting were conducted (except in one case) to encourage open discussion and obtain rich, unbiased data (ibid). By adopting an exploratory approach, the study aims to clarify an understanding of a phenomenon characterized by uncertainty. Exploratory research offers flexibility and adaptability, aligning with our abductive approach (Saunders et al., 2019, p.186-187). Saunders (2019, p.438) advocates for setting preset themes in order to increase flexibility which is in line with an interpretive perspective, which was found to be the most appropriate approach for this study.

4.4. Data Collection/Research Method

4.4.1. Essential Background Information

To assess if 4DWW companies employ recent graduates and determine the relevance of researching this phenomenon, we utilized the professional networking platform LinkedIn. Our objective was to examine whether 4DWW companies globally show an interest in hiring new graduates. Consequently, we sought to verify the timing of the company's adoption of the 4DWW framework and then identify if they have hired a recent graduate within that time span. Our findings revealed that a majority of companies identified as a 4DWW entity have indeed recruited recent graduates since transitioning to a 4DWW model.

4.4.2. Interview Sample

We, as interviewers, have selected candidates from the top computer science and business school programs in Sweden for our study. More specifically, the study includes students enrolled in the Bachelor's program in Business & Economics at SSE and the Computer Science program at KTH. The choice of these two groups is derived from the literature review, which suggested a potential difference in perceptions of 4DWW among individuals with backgrounds in IT and business. The sample comprised a total of 13 participants,

including one pilot interview not analyzed. Furthermore, six individuals from each program were interviewed, ensuring an equal representation of both genders to provide a comprehensive view from both perspectives. The duration of the interviews lasted between 28-57 minutes. An overview of interviewees who participated in the study can be found in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Overview of Interviewees [1]

Interview	Code Name	Gender	Age	Program
1	BM1	Male	20	Business & Economics
2	BM2	Male	22	Business & Economics
3	BM3	Male	21	Business & Economics
4	BF1	Female	23	Business & Economics
5	BF2	Female	24	Business & Economics
6	BF3	Female	26	Business & Economics
7	DM1	Male	23	Computer Science
8	DM2	Male	23	Computer Science
9	DM3	Male	25	Computer Science
10	DF1	Female	26	Computer Science
11	DF2	Female	24	Computer Science
12	DF3	Female	21	Computer Science

We identified high-achieving students from both majors by selecting the top program in Sweden for each major. This process involved evaluating programs with the highest admission scores, as reported by BI, which are based on high school grades (UHR, n.d.). Considering that both programs have consistently achieved the highest admission scores for the past five fall semesters, they can be widely regarded as the premier programs in their respective fields. Furthermore, our choice of respondents includes individuals who have completed at least two years of studies within their program, indicating their readiness to consider employer preferences.

4.4.3. Interview Process

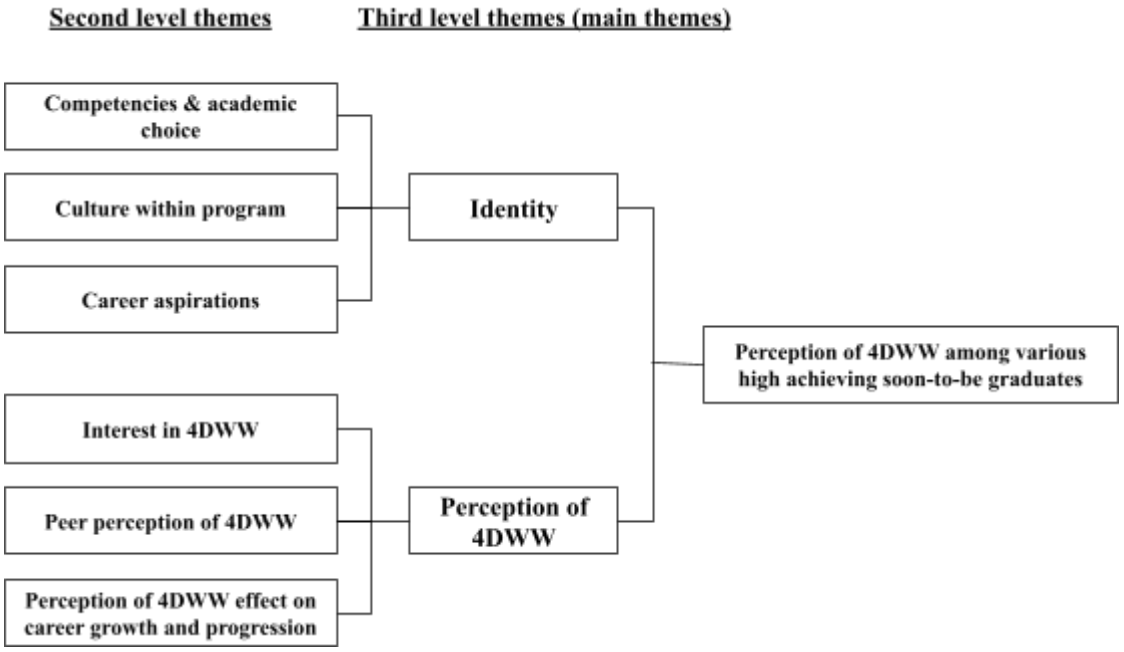
To ensure unbiased perceptions of the 4DWW, we as researchers aimed to understand interviewees' views with minimal prior knowledge. Therefore, the topic of 4DWW was not disclosed when contacting interviewees. Moreover, interview questions were not shared beforehand to allow for exploration of these aspects.[2]

[1] A more extensive version of Table 4.1 can be found in appendix 9.2
[2] Details about interview questions and definitions given to interviewees are available in our interview guide in appendix 9.1

4.4. Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted through a thematic analysis as outlined in (Saunders et al., 2019, p.651-660). Firstly, first-order themes were derived independently by each researcher in order to avoid bias. Combining the sets of first-order themes discounting for identical themes, 47 first-order themes were derived from the transcribed interviews, which further on was concentrated into 6 secondary level themes, which lastly gave us two main themes that outlined the structure of our empirics. The structure of the different level-order themes and their connection, can be found in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Structure of the different level-order themes



4.5. Tools and use of AI

In the composition of this thesis, tools like ChatGPT and Quillbot were employed to enhance sentence structure and overall coherence. AI was utilized for tasks such as refining structure and paraphrasing to achieve a more academic tone. It's important to note that no new texts were generated by AI; rather, these tools were utilized solely for the purpose of improving existing passages.

4.6. Discussion & Ethical Considerations and Implications

This study has opted for an abductive approach due to practicality reasons despite it being argued that research into a new and exciting topic, which sparks much debate and has limited

existing literature, such as the 4DWW, may warrant an inductive approach (Saunders et al., 2019, p.157).

The primary ethical concern and reflexive consideration arises from the fact that we as researchers are a part of one of the sample groups, potentially introducing interviewer bias (Saunders et al., 2019, p.447-449) that could significantly influence various facets of the research. This mainly includes the risk of imposed beliefs or frames of reference from us as interviewers. To mitigate potential biases and maintain objectivity, our approach involved subjecting our research to critical evaluation by our supervisor, thereby fostering a more objective analytical framework and minimizing the likelihood of unwarranted presumptions or skewed interpretations.

The integration of AI in our text underwent careful consideration due to its potential to alter meaning or produce novel content that may deviate from the guidelines established within our research community. As we progressed, an insight was made, which was to utilize an AI tool named Quillbot, which exclusively focuses on paraphrasing and avoids generative capabilities, unlike ChatGPT. This approach aimed to mitigate the risk of inadvertently generating new content which would require citation.

The data itself is shared only between the authors and the supervisor. This study also follows the GDPR regulations in Sweden. All collected data was at the end of the project permanently deleted.[3]

5. Empirics

The empirical data is structured corresponding to the two main themes and their respective secondary-level themes. We contend that providing quotations within specific contexts represents the optimal method to understand our empirical findings and answer our research question.

5.1 Identity

5.1.1 Competences & Choice of Major

Perceived competencies exhibited notable variation between the two groups, particularly concerning their perceived contributions to organizations or distinctive attributes within the job market. It became apparent that specific competencies were consistently prioritized and prominently mentioned across the two groups, underscoring commonalities within the groups.

[3] A copy of the consent form signed by all participants can be found in appendix 9.3

SSE students commonly emphasized their capability to work harder and for longer than others as well as citing their ability to handle stress as a fundamental competency.

> *"I think I can be a hard worker and I'm quite determined. If I find something that motivates me I like to sit with a task for longer hours, where I can really challenge myself and overcome struggles within these tasks."* **- BM1**

> *"I guess I'm good with stressful situations and I'm very organized and I've always been like that."* **- BF1**

Among computer science students, a prevalent theme was their initial emphasis on their capacity to think creatively or outside the box as a significant contribution they could offer to their prospective employers.

> *"I feel like I can be a creative person and I have the drive. So I could probably be very helpful in spawning ideas and approach problems from a creative standpoint or from a different perspective."* **- DM3**

Regarding academic choices, almost all SSE students cited the program's prestige as a primary factor when choosing their school, while none of the computer science students mentioned prestige despite the admissions requirement of their Computer Science program at KTH being the highest in Sweden.

> *"I guess because of its media presentation and from my high school, they talked a lot about "handels" so I think that's why I applied and also I know it's a good school with a good alumni network."* **- BF1**

> *"I didn't quite know and I just felt like "okay let's just shoot for the high instance" and that was this, so here I am."* **- BM2**

> *"I guess that for me it was that it's the best in the country and I want to study with the best and at the best place."* **- BM3**

While for computer science students there seemed to be a trend that the reason for picking the program was either an underlying interest in computers or gaming.

> *"Well, mostly it is that growing up I played a lot of computer games and that I wanted to know how things worked behind the hood and learn how to make websites and stuff like that. I have also always liked being creative and stuff and I felt there was potential for a creative outlet."* **- DM2**

Additionally, there appeared to be an interest in competence within the field of study among the computer science students. Two mentioned avoiding physics as their primary reason for choosing to study computer science, indicating competence-driven program choices in addition to interest.

> *"This was kind of the only program that didn't have a lot of physics, which was nice. That's sort of why I wanted to study there."* **- DF2**

> *"Actually, it was very interesting, I didn't like physics. I had done one term in 6th grade of programming and it felt very easy."* **- DF3**

Moreover, instances arose where computer science students cited their capability to complete tasks within designated time frames as part of their skill set description, as articulated by **DF3**:

> *"I can be very focused, if I have a problem that I need to solve then I am very good at ensuring that I do it by the allotted time to solve it."*

or as **DF1** said:

> *"Putting in the work that needs to be done while also setting the limits for myself"*

5.1.2 Culture at their Program

SSE students frequently characterize the school culture as highly competitive, with a strong emphasis on hard work and achieving work-related recognition. Many also note a lack of significant extracurricular activities outside of school which is often attributed to working part-time jobs in fields related to their studies, which occupies much of their time.

> *"It is to score high, it's a very big part of the environment and we pressure each other which is both good and bad but I think it's mostly good because it makes us do better things right? Also, we have a huge culture of scoring internships and like getting into these big companies, there's a lot of pressure there as well, like you want to go to a company that you feel that you can be proud of "* **- BM3**

Comparatively, the culture in computer science was described as quite relaxed.

> *"I think the ones that get into computer science - no one really cares about grades so even people who did study a lot, don't"* **- DF3**

The prevailing norms within the Computer Science program encompassed interests in gaming and computers, alongside its male-dominated composition. However, a significant majority expressed opposition to the notion of a stereotypical individual, particularly concerning aspirations and attitudes toward academic achievement.

> *"I don't know, I think it is weird to just say one stereotype I think, just because I think because I meet some people who are like me and really try to achieve the best and some other people who just have one thing in focus trying to get an E."* **- DM2**

A recurring theme, reminiscent of SSE students opting for part-time employment in their respective fields, was the prevalent culture of engaging in side projects relevant to their academic pursuits. These endeavors, predominantly undertaken for recreational or educational purposes, were frequently observed among computer science students. Something which they hoped to continue with in their work life as well.

> *"I still don't know how to make a complete game, cause this school is not going to teach me that, so that is why, as I mentioned earlier, I would like to spend more time in my free time just working on my individual projects."* **- DM2**

5.1.3 Career Aspirations

It became evident that a distinct ideal or norm exists regarding the desired professions and expected career paths among students at SSE, as articulated in, BM3 mentions *"I don't have the typical SSE aspiration because here you have like investment banking, management consultant and stuff ".* Their career choices were significantly shaped by their perceptions of ideal sectors, with many recognizing the influence of the SSE environment and norms on their preferred industry.

> *"Maybe the basic ones you do after "handels", management consulting, and stuff like that - I don't really know if I'm being honest."* **- BF1**

> *"I think that it's an overall talk about the three major parts - investment banking, consulting, or like entrepreneurship track.* [...]. *I think that everyone also at some point thinks about which category they like or do not like and it's just a general discussion around that."* **- BF2**

These career aspirations also appear to influence their expectations regarding work-life and the dynamics of the field they are entering.

> *"I guess it's gonna be a very stressful environment, maybe that's why a lot of SSE students want to work at those kinds of companies because you are used to it from university. So I guess long hours, very stressful, takes a mental toll on you, but I'm assuming it's gonna be like how it is here but worse I guess"* **- BF1**

> *"I would be expecting to work super hard, long hours, and devote most of my life to it. As well as work in a similar environment to SSE, where people are striving for the best and aiming to always get ahead of their colleagues and competitors."* **- BM1**

The SSE students seemed to value prestigiousness very highly when asked about which companies they want to work for and what they value in a company.

> *"No, I mean I don't have any set one but I think the most attractive ones would be the top consulting companies, similar to what most of the SSE students strive for so like, Mckinsey, BCG."* **- BM1**

Prestigiousness seems to be an all-encompassing aspiration as BM3 was the only one who identified himself as not following the prototypical mold of an SSE student but mentions in regards to the companies he would want to work for that " *I value the prestigiousness of companies just because I value my own prestige so that's why I also want a company that is prestigious."*.

In contrast, computer science students displayed a lack of consensus regarding the prototypical or ideal work, with aspirations among them varying widely. There was no consistent preference for specific sectors or industries. Moreover, when asked about preferred companies to work for, responses were often absent unless individuals had a strong interest in a particular topic. Nonetheless, there was agreement on the availability of diverse and viable job options, ease of securing employment, and the expectation of a favorable salary regardless.

> *"There is a lot of people that talk about, basically having this degree as a way to work from pretty much wherever you want."* **- DM2**

> *"I like the prospect of having an easy time getting a job and people within IT will always be needed."* **- DF3**

A prevailing trend among computer science students was the consistent emphasis on employers who fostered environments conducive to achieving a work-life balance.

> *"I know a lot of people that are doing some consulting right now and they are working like really long days. For me personally, that is not for me. So in a sense I kind of value work-life balance so I kind of prefer to go home by five."* **- DF2**

> *"I would very much love somewhere where I don't have to work full time, where I could maybe work 75% or something because I realized working full time is not giving me space to pursue other interests."* **- DF1**

Even avoiding industries of interest where work environments seem too harsh despite having a keen interest in it. DM2 who had a keen interest in gaming and was working on side projects within gaming for fun in his spare time said this about his career aspirations.

> *"What sprouted my interest in computer engineering was gaming and that,*[...]*The computer gaming industry is very competitive and not like the best work environment so it is not really a focus for me right now."* **- DM2**

When inquiring about long-term career aspirations, responses varied greatly between the groups. All SSE students mentioned aspirations for leadership positions, whereas common themes among computer science students included making an impact, achieving recognition within their field, or prioritizing personal happiness, with only two mentioning leadership roles as a career aspiration.

5.2 Perception of a 4DWW

5.2.1 Interest in 4DWW

The perceptions regarding the 4DWW varied widely between the SSE and computer science students after being provided with a description of the 4DWW. Initial thoughts for the SSE students were that it did not align with their expectations of the industries they aspire to work in.

> *"I don't think so. So if we are talking about typical jobs that SSE students go into, it's always talk about it being instead of a 40 hour work week it is 80 hours work week or more."* **- BM1**

> *"I think it could work, but in the industry that I might consider, I expect it's a lot of expectation to work outside maybe this 4DWW, and then you already have an expectation to work outside your five-day work week. I don't see how that could be transferred to a 4DWW"* **- BF2**

This sentiment had a lot to do also with their perception of what they expect from their first job after graduation.

> *"When they are graduating everyone wants to perform their very best and work in the most exhausting environment possible for them to be able to do less with time."* **- BF1**

Conversely, computer science students exhibited predominantly favorable inclinations, with a central emphasis on the potential enhancement of work-life balance, alongside the prospect of allocating more time to extracurricular pursuits such as engaging in side projects or pursuing diverse interests such as writing.

> *"Personally for me, I would appreciate the work-life balance that kind of forces, if one only works four days and then gets rest three days then I think that would lessen the negative consequences of the few times one might have to work extra."* **- DF3**

However, a sentiment among 5% computer science students was the fear of it perhaps being very stressful which also reinforces the point that work-life balance and a relaxed environment are highly valued among this group.

Whether they had a positive or negative view of the 4DWW a common instinctive thought was questioning the feasibility of the practice, both from a business standpoint but also an individual perspective.

> *"I think it's a bit weird in a sense because you do full commitment these four days but you should also do full commitment four days when you do a five-day week and then you still get additional work done."* **- BM3**

> *"If you are in a business where you need to coordinate a lot with another business and they don't have a 4DWW…. it would be difficult. A lot of industries and businesses would therefore be kind of like a mismatch."* **- DM1**

5.2.2 Peers' Perception of 4DWW

Most computer science students expected an overall positive peer perception towards the 4DWW. However, they acknowledged the possibility of a competitive subset within their program viewing it negatively, though the overall sentiment remained positive.

> *"I think that they would be very positive* [...] *This is something that we have talked about that the full-time norm is not something we see ourselves in."* **- DF2**

“I think they would be of a similar opinion as me, I could definitely imagine a few that just want to work, work, work, and get stuff done. But I think at least the people I hang out with are very much… they could imagine a different… they do question, like, why is it exactly like this right now? Wouldn't it be better if it potentially was like this, if we had a 4DWW” **- DM2**

The positive perception is partly due to the widespread appreciation for side projects among computer science students. Many of them have friends involved in such projects or engage in them personally, which contributes to a favorable view of the 4DWW as it would accommodate these activities.

“I think they would be positive. Some people want to spend more time on side projects and stuff like that and having like full dedicated days instead of having to do it in the evening.” **- DM1**

In general, the SSE student assumed that their peers would be negatively inclined toward the idea of a 4DWW.

“I think they would be very skeptical towards it. Because it is not the most traditional way of working and also that we are taught in this setting to do our very best and perform 100% of the time and then saying that you only have to perform during four days is a very confusing thought.” **- BF1**

“I think they would be negative. I think that this place - sort of the overall product of SSE - is people that are very good at what they do but they are okay with working a lot and not questioning a lot.” **- BM2**

5.2.3 Perceptions of 4DDW effect on Career progression/Professional growth

A primary factor contributing to the negative perception of the 4DWW was its misalignment with individuals' present aspirations or expectations of work. Particularly among SSE students, the 4DWW was perceived as potentially impeding their career advancement.

“I think it would impact you negatively because you would have less time to sort of achieve impact.” **- BM2**

This seemed especially pertinent when considering the prospect of how they’ll be viewed when switching jobs, especially to a normal five-day workweek.

“You might also be discriminated against because you come from a company where they, like, work 4DWW - “is this person really serious about working here?” **- BM2**

“This is unfamiliar for me so if I were to apply for another job after, people might question why I had a 4DWW so early in my career so maybe they would be a bit skeptical on how much I can handle.” **- BF1**

“it could be a minus on my CV so to say.” **- BM3**

Among the computer science students, opinions were more divided, with some expressing concerns that the 4DWW could hinder their career advancement, echoing sentiments shared by SSE students.

“It could be negative, I can see that like “ah you want easy work, we don't have easy work and we do not want you here”. I don't think that they would say that but the feeling it could be something to consider” **- DM3**

While some took the opposite stand and saw it as a great selling point.

“I would hope…. they would be impressed and see it as “wow you´ve been producing a full week's work in just 4 days and now you are gonna work 5 days so we are hoping that you will produce even more”” **- DF3**

Similar to SSE students, half of computer science students harbored doubts about starting with the 4DWW as their first job, despite finding it appealing. These doubts centered around concerns regarding competence building and feeling unprepared to handle tasks early in their careers under the 4DWW standard.

“I think that it would be good to have the experience and to not be faced with new tasks if one was working the 4DWW where one constantly was dealing with new challenges and having to learn new systems at the same time as you are supposed to be solving issues and coding things in those systems.” **- DF3**

“There is a kind of pressure so maybe that wouldn't be suitable for me in the long run or not initially when it's like my first job, it shouldn't be this it should be a more regular job where I have time to learn how to be a good employee for this kind of company.” **- DM3**

However, unanimously across both groups was the perception that the 4DDW was an attractive option for the future when family responsibilities and work experience increased.

“Let's say I'm going to have a family or like I need to start taking care of parents because they are getting older etc, I feel it's very important to have that extra day.” **- BF3**

“When you go past like maybe 50 or towards the older ages you´re doing your work efficiently and you have a lot of experience so then you can do it in four days.” **- DM1**

6. Analysis

6.1 Interest Value

Interest value pertains to the degree of enjoyment or interest an individual derives from a specific task (Wigfield, 1994; Eccles et al., 2009; Eccles & Wigfield, 2020; Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). In the context of this study, it refers to the *interest value* of 4DWW as a career option. Among SSE students, we observed a greater emphasis on the *interest value* associated with pursuing what is perceived as prestigious, both in terms of choice of school and occupation. The allure of the prestige linked to one's alma mater may indicate that some individuals possess an inherent inclination towards prestigious achievements. This aligns with the suggestion that prior socialization to university could have a greater influence than *career funneling* (Cui, 2020). This implies that *career funneling* at universities may not solely drive the desire for prestigious jobs. Nonetheless, the pursuit of prestige resulted in a diminished interest in the 4DWW among SSE students, as it conflicted with their perception of prestige within their *collective identity*.

Conversely, students in computer science expressed a high *interest value* in their subjects as well as a high interest in being competent within their subjects as for example choosing the program in Computer Science to avoid physics. Although the computer science students have a strong interest in specific subjects, they also expressed interest in 4DWW, despite its potential reduction in working hours and, consequently, in engagement with highly interesting tasks. However, this apparent paradox can be elucidated by the considerable importance that computer science students place on their leisure time and side projects, which fulfill their *personal identity* needs. The inclination to value free time aligns with the considerable emphasis placed on work-life balance, which was particularly valued among computer science students. Thus, the findings in our empirics may suggest a higher prioritization of work-life balance and alignment with the 4DWW among those aspiring to work in the tech industry.

Furthermore, previous literature highlights the importance of high school socialization procedures in shaping students' interests and values, particularly for computer science students who reject *career-funneled* options (Cui, 2020). The study reveals that students who rejected *career-funneled* options chose an interest that often traces back to their social and work-related interests in their high school years, such as previously detailed interest in gaming, computers, or the environment, which is something that is corroborated in our study.

6.2 Attainment Value

The perception of the 4DWW is significantly influenced by individuals' *attainment value*, as it can profoundly impact the validation of certain qualities closely tied to their self-image (Wigfield, 1994; Eccles et al., 2009; Eccles & Wigfield, 2020; Wigfield & Eccles, 2020), as well as their *personal* and *collective identities* (Eccles et al., 2009). For those harboring a negative view of the 4DWW, it may stem from a lack of alignment between the qualities they value in themselves and how the 4DWW fails to affirm them. This negative *attainment value* towards the 4DWW becomes apparent, particularly for individuals who pride themselves on their ability to work harder and longer than others, a core strength highlighted by SSE students who opposed the 4DWW. The contradiction arises because the 4DWW conflicts with their *personal* and *collective identities*. This negative perception can partly be attributed to *career funneling* (Binder, Davis, & Bloom, 2016), as many individuals with negative views mentioned experiencing significant shifts in their career aspirations after attending their institution. Consequently, attaining prestigious career options, often associated with a culture of long working hours, becomes a means of validating their self-worth from the *collective identity* standpoint —a dynamic incongruent with the principles of the 4DWW.

One contributing factor to the heightened interest among computer science students towards the 4DWW is the alignment of the 4DWW with qualities they seek to reinforce. As from a *personal identity* perspective, computer science students most commonly cite creativity and thinking outside the box as well as getting jobs done within certain timeframes as the competence they believe they bring to a company. Moreover, several interviewees noted the belief that the increased rest afforded by a 4DWW would enhance their productivity and improve their strengths in creativity. Thus, these perceptions not only make the 4DWW contribute to a positive *attainment value* but also increase their *expectation for success* to a certain extent.

6.3 Perceived Costs & Expectation for Success & Utility Value

The evaluation of *perceived costs* across the two groups was dependent on how well the activity aligned with the person's *personal* and *collective identities* (Eccles et al., 2009). Empirical evidence suggests that SSE students, who can be generalized as people aiming for prestigious/high work-hour jobs and leadership positions, perceive the *opportunity cost* of engaging in the 4DWW as a hindrance. Not only do they anticipate diminished competence and hindered professional growth resulting from reduced work hours, but many SSE students also anticipate negative perceptions from employers and peers. These beliefs of the 4DWW, in turn, undermine their aspirations for leadership positions, thereby reducing both the *expectation for success* and also their *utility value* associated with the 4DWW. However, there seemed to also be a high *emotional cost* due to peer perception/social stigma which can be connected to the importance of the individuals *collective identity* (Eccles et al., 2009) but also this factor points towards the peer pressure effects described within *career funneling* being present (Binder, Davis, & Bloom, 2016).

From the perspective of computer science students, *perceived costs* primarily revolve around competence development and feasibility concerns, pointing towards a shared perception of their being *opportunity cost* affiliated to the 4DWW among soon-to-be graduates. Certain costs that individuals associated with work-life seemed to be alleviated by the idea of a 4DWW such as the *outside effort cost* as described by Flake et al. (2015). This positive alignment with 4DWW can be credited to its capability of allowing for their *personal identity* needs to be fulfilled, such as being able to pursue other hobbies or have a better work-life balance. Connected to this, the 4DWW was also linked to a reduction in *emotional cost*. This perceived reduction in *emotional cost* is further tied to *attainment value*, as within the Computer Science program, the overall *identity* was described as relaxed, with a strong respect for individual differences in aspirations. Consequently, there appeared to be few barriers to the 4DWW conflicting with a person's *collective identity* as there was no clear *collective identity* dictating the desired work arrangements for individuals. This underscores the significant influence of *collective identity* on individuals' perceptions of the 4DWW, as where one works and the nature of one's work are closely intertwined with the *collective identity* a person seeks to align with, a distinction evident between our two interview groups (Eccles et al., 2009).

Notably, there was no conclusive evidence indicating a significant decrease in *utility value* attributed to the 4DWW among computer science students. This observation can be attributed to their confidence in their ability to secure high income and desirable job opportunities regardless of their workplace as they perceived that their expertise is in high demand across various industries.

7. Discussion

7.1 Answering the Research Question

"How do soon-to-be graduates from various high-achieving academic backgrounds perceive the offering of a 4-day workweek when considering potential job opportunities?"

At a superficial empirical level, our study suggests that implementing a 4DWW might be more suitable for attracting high-achieving individuals in the tech sector rather than in business sectors which aligns with notions of existing literature (Cui, 2020). This is indicated by the generally positive perception among high-achieving computer science students and the overall negative perception among high-achieving business students.

Our study underscores the significant variability in perceptions of the 4DWW compared to traditional FWP offerings, especially among soon-to-be graduates. Diverse perceptions of the 4DWW ranged from markedly negative to decidedly positive. This contrasts with the established effectiveness of traditional FWPs in attracting prospective employees across a broad spectrum (Onken-Menke, Nüesch, & Kröll, 2018; Thompson et al., 2015). However,

one notable similarity between these groups, indicative of a more unified perception among soon-to-be graduates regarding the 4DWW, was a shared negative perception regarding its potential hindrance to competence building within one's field of work especially early in one's career. The perceived loss of experience was seen as a significant cost, contributing to diminished *self-concepts*, aspects valued by both groups as soon-to-be graduates. However, both groups also viewed the 4DWW positively as a viable option for the future, particularly in scenarios involving family responsibilities.

Of particular interest is discerning the underlying reasons for these divergent views, for which we have identified four primary factors contributing to either negative or positive perspectives. Additionally, it's essential to recognize the significant influence of *identity* on individuals' perceptions of future occupations (Eccles, 2009). These four factors are not only influenced by but also contribute to shaping individuals' *personal* and *collective identities* which in turn affects their perception.

Major: An individual's chosen field of work is closely associated with their academic major, where inherent characteristics of different professions may suggest varying suitability for the 4DWW. For instance, among computer science students, there is a recognized value placed on time outside of formal work hours for contemplation and problem-solving related to work tasks. The 4DWW was perceived to augment this aspect of an individual, thereby positively influencing *expectations for success* to a certain degree in relation to the practice.

Career Aspirations: Career aspirations exert a notable influence, contingent upon both the nature of work an individual seeks and their ambitions for career advancement, including aspirations for leadership roles. Across various fields, certain sectors exhibit heavier workloads, as evidenced by the career aspirations of the SSE students, though similar conditions may exist in other domains. Consequently, it was observed that individuals aspiring towards sectors characterized by extended working hours as part of their cultural norm may perceive diminished *attainment value* associated with the 4DWW. Moreover, aspirations for leadership roles were intertwined with the notion of exerting significant effort in one's early career to mitigate future workload, thus rendering the prospect of the 4DWW as potentially diminishing the *utility value* of attaining a leadership position. This consideration remains pertinent irrespective of one's industry, although this study identified a discrepancy in leadership aspirations between the two examined groups.

Educational Institution: One prominent influence of the educational institution on a person is the phenomenon of *career funneling*, which may adversely impact perceptions of the 4DWW. This phenomenon contributes to heightened *perceived costs*, diminished *attainment value*, devaluation of *interest value*, and an augmented emphasis on *utility value*.

Value of leisure time: The value of an individual's free time does not only increase the *interest value* of a 4DWW but also reduces the *outside effort cost* perception. Furthermore, the notable emphasis on work-life balance can be connected to this factor which appears to serve as a pivotal determinant for fostering a positive perception of the 4DDW.

7.2 Other Findings

In our literature review, gender emerged as a potential determinant influencing soon-to-be graduates' perceptions of the 4DWW. Despite initial expectations drawn from literature suggesting a gender preference for the 4DWW (Chung, 2022; Chung, 2020; Jakobsen, 2023), our analysis revealed no significant differences between responses from male and female participants across both groups. However, the discrepancy from the literature (Chung, 2022) could be attributed to socio-political differences between our studies. Moreover, it's important to consider potential moderating effects such as age and level of education, which may have contributed to this discrepancy and warrant further investigation for a more nuanced understanding.

7.3 Contribution and Practical Implications

From an academic perspective, the study contributes to a broader understanding of talent attraction in regard to the 4DWW adding to the literature regarding FWP effects on application attraction and the perception of alternative work arrangements (Ashford, George, & Blatt, 2007; Spreitzer, Cameron, & Garrett, 2017; Rau & Hyland, 2002). On a broader scope, our research addresses the gap in understanding of which talent is drawn to the concept of a 4DWW. Besides providing new research to the area the study also strengthens existing research such as the concept of *career funneling* (Binder, Davies & Bloom, 2016).

The findings of the study can therefore be of value to companies who are, as of current, or planning to implement a 4DWW concept as a way of building expectations of what kind of job seekers they may or may not attract. They also gain insights into what potentially can be done in an attempt to alter this, impacting recruitment strategies and branding of the concept and their company. Furthermore, this holds significance for interest groups such as Four Day Work Week Global, who consistently conduct and engage with research aimed at gaining deeper insights into the concept of 4DWW.

7.4 The Limitations of the Study

The limited availability of peer-reviewed academic research on the topic of 4DWW posed a significant constraint on our study, impeding access to prior studies for comparison. Additionally, the interpretive approach adopted in our study, along with the relation of us as researchers to one of the sample groups, presents a potential limitation due to the possibility of bias, which neither we nor our supervisor may have fully mitigated. Furthermore, the study's confinement to a specific context, namely Sweden, may constrain the generalizability of our findings to other contexts beyond Sweden. Moreover, perceptions of contentious topics such as the 4DWW, subject to ongoing debate and influenced by societal factors, are subject to change over time, potentially affecting the relevance of our study's findings in future discussions.

7.5 For Future Research

To gain deeper insights into the attractiveness of a 4DWW as a career option, various variables could be modified or incorporated. Firstly, investigating the perception of a 4DWW in countries where work-life balance is less emphasized could provide valuable comparative data. Additionally, examining individuals with similar educational backgrounds but from different academic institutions with varying admission requirements could reveal more potential insights into the attitudes toward 4DWW. Another avenue for exploration involves expanding the analysis to consider diverse educational backgrounds to determine if certain fields are more or less suited to 4DWW.

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9. Appendices

9.1 Interview Guide

9.1.1 Interview Questions

Personal beliefs & motivations and Career Preferences:

1. How do you like to spend your spare time, and what hobbies do you value?
2. What motivated you to opt for this program that you have studied?
3. You are pursuing a program that requires very high grades in high school and a lot of energy to succeed. Would you say that you have invested a lot of time in your studies and if so, why?
4. Can you describe the culture at your program?
5. What industry or sector do you prefer to work in?why?
6. Are there any specific companies you aspire to work for?
7. What do you value from your employer?
8. Tell us about your future career aspirations.
9. Do you think the culture at this program has affected your career aspirations?
10. What are your expectations about working in such an industry or for those types of companies?
11. Can you describe what motivates you the most when it comes to pursuing your studies or career goals?
12. What attributes do you believe you can contribute to a company?
13. How clear do you think the connection is between the time spent in your studies or work and the rewards or outcomes you receive?

Perception about a 4DWW and work

14. Have you heard of or considered the concept of a four-day workweek before? How would you define it in terms of time allocation and salary compared to full-time work?
15. (Definition of 4DWW provided in appendix 6.1.2) What are your initial thoughts or impressions about the idea of working a four-day workweek?
16. Would you be interested in working at a company with a four-day workweek? If not, is there anything that could change this? E.g. monetary compensation, prestigious company, etc.
17. What potential benefits and drawbacks do you see in working at a company with a four-day workweek? Are any of them more important to you than others?
18. If you were to have a day off, what do you envision yourself doing?
19. If not now, could you consider working a four-day workweek at any other time in your life?

20. How important is it for you to feel connected and supported by your peers and colleagues in your academic or professional endeavors?
21. What factors do you think contribute to building strong relationships and collaboration within academic or work settings?
22. How do you believe your peers from your program would perceive the 4DWW practice as a career option?
23. Do you believe that the majority of your learning and skill-building occurs within your academic or professional setting, or do you find value in experiences outside of these environments?
24. How do you think your effectiveness/productivity would be affected if you worked shorter, yet potentially more intense hours?
25. If given the opportunity to work in shorter, more intense bursts, how do you think it would affect your ability to learn and grow professionally?
26. How do you think a four-day workweek might impact your career progression and opportunities for advancement?
27. Can you rank the following flexible work practices—four-day workweek, fully remote work, hybrid work, and flexitime? What factors influence your ranking of these practices?(Definitions provided to interviewees can be found in Appendix 6.1.3.)
28. If there were a possibility for a hybrid work arrangement within the 4DWW, would it change your ranking in any way? Why or why not?

Social change and gender expectations

29. What are your expectations about how men and women view the 4DWW and is your gender something that you think affects your view of 4DWW in your opinion?
30. What are your expectations of AI's impact on your work in the future
31. When thinking about this, does your view of the 4DWW change in any way?

9.1.2 Definition of 4DWW provided to the interviewees during the interview

The 4DWW movement encourages the adoption of the 100-80-100™ principle. This principle entails receiving full pay (100%) for working reduced hours (80%) while maintaining a commitment to delivering full productivity (100%). Therefore, adopting a schedule of 8-hour workdays spread over 4 days, totaling a 32-hour work week instead of the traditional 8-hour workday over 5 days, which equates to a 40-hour work week. This approach has demonstrated beneficial outcomes for workers, including heightened well-being. However, it has also been observed to lead to more intense work hours and heavier scheduling. An important note is that it is usually a practice that is implemented company-wide thus implying that your coworkers also work a 4DWW.

9.1.3 Definition of the four flexible work practices provided to the interviewees during the interview

- **Fully remote work:** A typical 40-hour work week, where all work is done digitally and remotely.

- **Hybrid work:** A typical 40-hour work week, where work hours are split between in-office work and work done digitally/remotely.

- **Flexitime:** A typical 40-hour work week, with all work done in the office, where one has the flexibility to choose when to start and end one's workday.

- **4DWW:** A 32-hour week, with all work done in the office.

9.2 Interview Sample

The code name is derived from the participants' majors, where students majoring in computer science are represented by codes starting with 'D' and business students with 'B'. The second letter signifies gender, with 'M' for male and 'F' for female. Additionally, each participant was assigned a number between 1-3.

Interview	Code Name	Gender	Age	Education	Interview Time
1	BM1	Male	20	SSE BSc in Business & Economics	31:49
2	BM2	Male	22	SSE BSc in Business & Economics	47:03
3	BM3	Male	21	SSE BSc in Business & Economics	47:26
4	BF1	Female	23	SSE BSc in Business & Economics	28:39
5	BF2	Female	24	SSE BSc in Business & Economics	39:30
6	BF3	Female	26	SSE BSc in Business & Economics	56:20
7	DM1	Male	23	KTH Computer Science	35:26
8	DM2	Male	23	KTH Computer Science	40:20
9	DM3	Male	25	KTH Computer Science	46:58
10	DF1	Female	26	KTH Computer Science	44:13
11	DF2	Female	24	KTH Computer Science	41:23
12	DF3	Female	21	KTH Computer Science	43:12

Table 4.1 extensive version; Appendix 9.2

9.3 Consent Form



Consent to participation in student's survey / interview

The student's project. As an integral part of the educational program at the Stockholm School of Economics, enrolled students complete an individual thesis. This work is sometimes based upon surveys and interviews connected to the subject. Participation is naturally entirely voluntary, and this text is intended to provide you with necessary information about that may concern your participation in the study or interview. You can at any time withdraw your consent and your data will thereafter be permanently erased.

Confidentiality. Anything you say or state in the survey or to the interviewers will be held strictly confidential and will only be made available to supervisors, tutors and the course management team.

No personal data will be published. The thesis written by the students will not contain any information that may identify you as participant to the survey or interview subject.

Secured storage of data. All data will be stored and processed safely by the SSE and will be permanently deleted when the projected is completed.

Your rights under GDPR. You are welcome to visit https://www.hhs.se/en/about-us/data-protection/ in order read more and obtain information on your rights related to personal data.

Project title	Year and semester
Beyond the Fifth Day	Spring 2024
Aim of the study	
How top graduate job seekers perceive a 4DWW and the underlying reasoning.	
Student/s responsible for the study or interview	
Hampus Månsson & Marcus Linnarsson	
Supervisors and department at SSE	**Supervisor e-mail address**
Anna Söderblom DMO	anna.soderblom@hhs.se
Type of personal data about you to be processed	
We will collect sex, education, year of graduation from university and personal opinions. Sex, education and year of graduation will mainly be collected in order to guarentee the participants fit for the thesis scope and the validity of the thesis. Personal opinions will be brought for analysis to construct a conlusion however, under no circumstances will participants in any way be indentified in the thesis.	

I have taken part of the information provided above and consent to take part in this study:

Signature	Place and date
Name	