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THE IMPACT OF  
DYNAMIC ROLES WITH DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES  
ON THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES  
OF EARLY-STAGE STARTUPS

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**Abstract (100 words maximum)**

This study explores recruitment and retention strategies in early-stage European startups, emphasizing flexible work arrangements and dynamic roles with development opportunities. Startups face unique challenges, including limited resources and high uncertainty, making employee management crucial for success. The underlying survey data reveal that temporal and locational flexibility as well as dynamic roles with personal and professional growth significantly impact job satisfaction, productivity, and employee loyalty. These practices align with modern workforce priorities, addressing demands for autonomy and growth. By adopting such strategies, startups can attract top talent, foster engagement, and gain a competitive advantage in dynamic and competitive labour markets.

**Keywords (minimum of four)**

Entrepreneurship, Startup, Recruitment, Retention, Flexibility, Employee Engagement, Human Resource Management (HRM)

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## 1. Introduction

*A startup is “a human institution, founded to create a new product or service in the conditions of extreme uncertainty” – Eric Ries (2011, p.8)*

Startups are key drivers of innovation, long-term economic growth, and competitiveness. In Europe alone, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), including startups, account for 99% of all businesses (European Commission, 2021). Nonetheless, most nascent companies fail during their development phase, as their primary focus on organizational development and expansion often leads to the neglect of effective resource management (Marcon & Ribeiro, 2021). Startups can gain a competitive advantage in the dynamic market by focusing on human capital management. The success of any organization hinges on the quality of its human resources, but this factor is especially critical in the context of startups (Zahra, 2021). It is therefore challenging for businesses to sustain and grow a business without the right talent and team structure (Da Costa & Correia Loureiro, 2019). Early-stage ventures operate under significant constraints, including limited financial resources and high levels of uncertainty, which necessitate a reliance on employees who can drive innovation, stabilize operations, and scale the business (Beerthuis et al., 2024, Sauermann, 2017). Ries's (2011) definition further underscores the essential role of human initiative in driving innovation amid unpredictable conditions. Yet, attracting and retaining skilled human capital, which forms the core and driving force of any organization, remains a significant hurdle for startups (Da Costa & Correia Loureiro, 2019; Wiesenbergl et al., 2020). Unlike established companies, they often lack the reputation and resources necessary to compete for skilled employees, making human resource management a central challenge (Rocha & Grilli, 2023). To summarize, existing research highlights the vital role of startups within the business landscape. However, the high failure rate of startups and the difficulty of attracting employees during their early development stages point to a need for further investigation.

### **Existing Research and Gaps**

While extensive research has been conducted on human capital management tactics such as talent recruitment and retention in established firms with sufficient resources and well-developed organizational structures, there is a notable gap in studies addressing these processes within early-stage startups. Young ventures operate under unique and resource-constrained conditions, making employee management a distinct challenge (Dash et al., 2022). However, existing literature on startups often focuses on founders and business models, with limited attention given to the critical contributions of non-entrepreneurial employees (Choi et al., 2023). This oversight is significant, as the ability to effectively recruit and retain skilled and adaptable employees is a key determinant of a nascent company's success and long-term viability (Rocha & Grilli, 2023; Braun et al., 2017). Failing to secure employees with the necessary skills and fit can lead to organizational failure, regardless of the quality of the business strategy (Rocha & Grilli, 2023). This imbalance highlights the need to better understand how startups can effectively recruit and retain employees to navigate early-stage hurdles and build a foundation for sustainable growth.

### **Research Questions**

To address this gap, this study aims to enhance the understanding of employee management in early-stage European startups by investigating strategies for improving recruitment and retention. Specifically, it examines two critical aspects: the impact of flexible work arrangements as well as dynamic roles with development opportunities on attracting and retaining talent. In pursuit of this goal, the study addresses the following research questions

***RQ1: How do flexible work arrangements (e.g. remote work, adjustable hours) affect employee recruitment and retention in early-stage startups?***

***RQ2: How do dynamic roles (e.g. the ability to shift or redefine roles) with development opportunities affect employee recruitment and retention in early-stage startups?***

To explore these research questions, the study employs a quantitative survey methodology, focusing on individuals who are currently employed in European early-stage startups, have previously worked in such environments, or are actively seeking employment in this sector. This contextual approach is designed to provide a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing recruitment and retention, incorporating diverse perspectives from within the startup ecosystem. By examining these factors, the research seeks to provide actionable insights into how startups can effectively differentiate themselves in competitive labour markets to attract top talent. It also outlines strategies for building a committed and resilient workforce through flexibility arrangements and dynamic roles with development opportunities. This will contribute to the formulation of a theoretical framework that is suitable for the effective management of the startup's recruitment and retention strategies.

## **2. Literature Review**

The following section analyses the key concepts of current literature in entrepreneurship, human capital, and its management, as well as employee engagement, with a particular focus on their relevance to early-stage startups. This foundational discussion provides the basis for this study and informs the development of the paper's main research topics.

### **2.1 Entrepreneurship and Startups**

This section lays the groundwork by defining the entrepreneurial context and the characteristics of startups. It also provides a clear differentiation between entrepreneurial leaders and non-entrepreneurial employees to frame the research scope. **Entrepreneurship** encompasses the creation, management, and growth of new businesses, often characterized by innovation, risk-taking, and leadership. A key expression of entrepreneurship is found in early-stage startups, where founders aim to bring new ideas to market while navigating uncertainty and rapid change. These companies, typically in their first three to five years of operation, are often small, with fewer than 50 employees, and are primarily focused on validating their business models. At this

stage, startups face significant uncertainty and financial constraints, operating with limited resources. Despite these challenges, they prioritize rapid growth and scaling (Rocha & Grilli, 2023).

Early-stage startups face a unique set of structural and operational challenges they must navigate which are outlined in the following. A young ventures' environment is inherently risky, given the uncertain and early-stage nature of these businesses. The limited resources available to startups and their reliance on (external) funding can result in instability if the performance targets are unmet. Furthermore, these young businesses mostly enter new or rapidly evolving markets with unpredictable demand and often intense competition. This volatility further exacerbates the risks to business stability and security (Eisenmann, 2020; Benedetti-Fasil et al., 2022). Besides, early-stage startups often struggle to establish market presence and credibility due to resource constraints. Indeed, stakeholders, including potential employees and investors, evaluate a young venture's competitive positioning, requiring these firms to differentiate themselves in a crowded landscape by emphasizing their innovation-centric mission and scalability potential (Wiesenberg et al., 2020; Spender et al., 2017). Moreover, unlike established firms, early-stage startups must operate in highly dynamic environments, which makes them more flexible but also more vulnerable to external factors such as market shifts and financial instability (Andersson & Noseleit, 2009). As startups grow, they must differentiate their employer brand to attract and retain top talent. This involves creating a workplace culture that emphasizes close-knit teamwork, early responsibility, and a shared sense of purpose. Therefore, effective communication and clear cultural values are crucial for fostering engagement and appealing to employees who seek meaningful work environments (Tumasjan et al., 2011). Moreover, startups operate in highly volatile markets, which necessitates an agile approach to developing and delivering solutions. They often explore solutions on the go without the luxury of extensive pre-planning, reflecting a culture that is non-

hierarchical, adaptive, and fast-paced (Rogers & Paul, 2018). The dynamic and flexible nature of startup environments often fosters uncertainty and stress among employees. Lacking structured hierarchical systems and HRM processes, startups frequently require employees to undertake diverse responsibilities under uncertain conditions. This dual-edged culture, while promoting adaptability and innovation, may exacerbate stress, role conflicts, and job insecurity (Monsen & Wayne Boss, 2009).

In this context, **non-entrepreneurial employees** play an essential role in driving these strategies forward, bringing in operational, technical, and creative expertise. Their efforts are critical to the startup's success, particularly in areas like driving innovation, advancing product development, and supporting scaling efforts (Rocha & Grilli, 2023; Braun et al., 2017). Employees bring new skillsets and fresh perspectives that not only help stabilize the startup but also expand its operational capacity, thereby fostering sustainable growth and enhancing the firm's resilience in uncertain market conditions (Sauermann, 2017).

Entrepreneurship in early-stage startups drives value creation by seizing opportunities despite risks and uncertainty. These ventures are crucial for innovation, job growth, and disrupting technology and business models in fast-evolving sectors (Andersson & Noseleit, 2009).

## **2.2 Human Capital Management in Startups**

This section explores the critical role of human capital in startups. The discussion encompasses strategies for talent acquisition and retention under resource constraints, highlighting core elements like employer branding and company culture. Additionally, it introduces the dynamic nature of startup roles with development opportunities as well as flexible work environments as key factors influencing employee engagement and commitment.

### **2.2.1 The Importance and Challenges of Talent Acquisition**

The traditional view of the 'hero' entrepreneur, the startup founder, as the sole driver of a business's success, is an outdated concept. While founders often serve as a visionary leader,

research shows that a young firm's success is largely rooted in the collective efforts of the organization's entire team (Braun et al., 2017). In contrast to established companies, with substantial economic resources and structured processes, startups face unique challenges, including resource scarcity and high levels of uncertainty (Braun et al., 2017). In these settings, human capital emerges as a critical resource capable of creating a competitive advantage. Serving as the foundation for innovation, organizational growth, and operational stability, non-entrepreneurial employees often become the organization's backbone during its most formative stages (Rocha & Grilli, 2023).

**Innovation** is essential for young ventures, which frequently challenge existing industry boundaries or establish entirely new markets. In such environments, employees are vital as they play an indispensable role in developing products or services in a timely manner. Unlike larger firms, where roles are well-defined, startup employees need to be flexible and creative, often working with limited resources. These individuals are typically *wearing multiple hats* and solving complex problems, thereby fostering a culture of rapid and impactful innovation (Bonesso et al., 2020). Moreover, startups need to scale quickly, making employees with expertise in designing and improving scalable systems invaluable. Collectively, these workers contribute significantly to the company's development and scalability, further enhancing its capacity to adapt swiftly and seize on emerging **growth** opportunities (Beerthuis et al., 2024). While larger companies have established structures to mitigate risks, startups depend heavily on employees who can contribute to a resilient culture. Such personnel often exhibit a high level of commitment and adaptability, enabling the formation of cohesive teams capable of navigating setbacks effectively. In the context of a young venture, **stability** does not imply a lack of change. Rather, it signifies the capacity to navigate change seamlessly and collaboratively, which is crucial for long-term sustainability (Aldianto et al., 2021). Nevertheless, attracting ideal candidates poses several challenges for startups. Due to the

limited stability inherent to their status as nascent enterprises, startups frequently find themselves in a position where they are unable to offer the same degree of job security that is typically associated with larger, more mature companies (Rocha & Grilli, 2023; Sauermann, 2017). The elevated risk of failure and uncertainty surrounding long-term success often deter prospective employees, who may worry about its impact on their income and career progression. In terms of remuneration, startups typically lack the financial resources to match the fixed salaries and benefits that larger firms can offer (Rocha & Grilli, 2023; Sauermann, 2017). Moreover, large businesses enjoy greater brand visibility and established reputations as attractive employers, naturally drawing a broader pool of candidates and enhancing their recruitment advantage. This configuration may deter individuals who value and prioritize financial security stability (Sauermann, 2017). To sum up, startups face talent challenges due to limited resources and visibility. However, success relies on building adaptable teams and fostering collaboration to drive growth.

### 2.2.2 Startups Recruitment Process

Recruiting personnel is widely recognized as one of the most resource-intensive and expensive processes for organizations (Laumer et al., 2014; Wiblen et al., 2012). However, for early-stage startups effective employee recruitment and retention are crucial. As Rocha and Grilli (2023) note: “Although early-stage hiring alone might not guarantee long-term success, it provides one of the first indications that a venture is evolving well by expanding its endowments of human capital (i.e., knowledge, skills, and ability)” (p. 1644). Unlike more established companies, which often can offer better pay and job security, startups face the dual challenge of standing out to potential hires while fostering a supportive environment that encourages them to stay (Sauermann, 2017). Furthermore, startups often encounter recruitment, and retention challenges due to limited HR experience and the absence of structured HR management systems, which frequently leads to ad-hoc hiring by the founding team (Rocha & Grilli, 2023). This lack of

resources and experience restricts their ability to conduct thorough candidate searches, which makes it difficult to find well-matched hires with essential skills (Belka, 2019). Consequently, startups risk issues such as role misalignment, skill gaps, and interpersonal conflicts, which can negatively impact overall performance (Belka, 2019). A well-structured and effective hiring and retention strategy can therefore have a significant impact on a startup's ability to scale and succeed. The following outlines the essential steps and strategies that startups should follow to build a solid hiring process.

Firstly, startups need to clearly define their *hiring needs*. Due to limited resources, it is crucial to prioritize roles that align with immediate business objectives and growth trajectories. These roles often require individuals who can multitask and contribute across various functions, given the dynamic nature of startups (Roach & Sauermann, 2023). Early hires play a pivotal role in shaping the company's future direction, so startups must be strategic in their selection. The hiring process itself must be streamlined and efficient, particularly since startups often have limited HR resources. Designing a straightforward and effective hiring process helps avoid unnecessary delays and ensures that young companies can secure top talent quickly. This begins with creating clear and concise job descriptions that specify the role, required skills, and expectations while emphasizing the potential impact the new hire will have on the company's success (Sauermann, 2017). Secondly, startups must implement the right *talent attraction strategies* to appeal to the ideal candidates (Wiblen et al., 2012). Startups can utilize various candidate sourcing methods, including job boards, employee referrals, networking events, and niche platforms (e.g., LinkedIn, StepStone, or Indeed), which cater to startup talent. Y Combinator, for instance, is a renowned venture capital firm and startup accelerator that offers intensive support, funding, and mentorship to startups in their early stages but also serves as a valuable job board for those seeking to join the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Kelly, 2024; *Y Combinator*, n.d.). In addition, venture capital companies such as Earlybird Venture Capital

often feature job boards on their websites to support their portfolio companies in finding the right talent (*Earlybird Venture Capital*, n.d.). Startups can also leverage their existing networks within entrepreneurial ecosystems to attract individuals who are more likely to resonate with the company's culture and vision (Bendig et al., 2024). Moreover, implementing technology solutions such as Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) can streamline the *pre-selection process* and ensure effective candidate management (Wybieralski, 2024). During the *selection* and interview stages, it is critical for startups to evaluate both the technical skills and cultural fit of potential hires. Young ventures operate in highly uncertain and fast-paced environments, which means that adaptability, responsibility, and a strong cultural fit are essential attributes for new employees. Task-based interviews or practical assessments, such as case solving, can help evaluate whether candidates possess the specific skills required for the role (Sauermann, 2017). Beyond technical qualifications, it is important to determine whether candidates demonstrate a willingness to grow alongside the company. Employees who are passionate about the company's goals and motivated to contribute to its success are often better suited for startup roles (Breugst et al., 2012). If the candidate meets all requirements and successfully completes each step of the recruitment process, the process usually culminates in a job offer from the company, making a successful *hire*.

### 2.2.3 Recruitment and Retention Strategies

Attracting and retaining talent is an essential component for any startup's success. However, for early-stage companies, offering competitive compensation that attracts top candidates and fosters long-term commitment can be particularly difficult.

Incorporating *equity or stock options* into the compensation package of a job advertisement is among the most effective strategies startups can utilize to enhance employee recruitment and retention. Research highlights that employees with equity stakes are more likely to remain through challenging times, as they are driven by their personal investment in the company's

growth and potential financial gains from successful exits, such as initial public offerings (IPOs) or acquisitions (Sauermann, 2017). Additionally, equity promotes alignment between employee and organizational goals, encouraging performance as well as fostering a collective sense of purpose and responsibility. It facilitates attracting mission-driven individuals and retaining them in high-risk, high-reward environments (Sauermann, 2017). Building and nurturing a distinctive *company culture* has emerged as another essential strategy for recruiting and retaining employees in startups. A startup's culture, typically characterized by a flat organizational structure, close-knit teams, and high levels of collaboration, plays a significant role in enhancing employee engagement and job satisfaction (Rocha & Grilli, 2023; Sauermann, 2017). Moreover, employees are more likely to remain loyal to a company where they feel their contributions are valued and where the organizational culture aligns with their personal values (Sauermann, 2017). The role of culture in both recruitment and retention is particularly important in the context of early-stage startups, where the organizational structure must be fluid, and roles are often not rigidly defined. Such a culture attracts individuals who thrive in dynamic, fast-paced environments and retains them by offering opportunities to have a direct impact on the company's success (Roach & Sauermann, 2023). Building a *strong employer brand* is essential for startups to successfully attract talent. This is particularly crucial given the unique challenges they face, such as the job insecurity of early-stage ventures and competition from larger firms with stronger brand recognition (Rocha & Grilli, 2023). Thus, to enhance recruitment and retention efforts, the venture must establish a strong employer branding, that effectively represents the organization's mission and values to attract ideal talent (Laumer et al., 2014). An effective employer branding strategy allows startups to differentiate themselves by emphasizing their unique value propositions, which may include opportunities for professional growth, innovation, and a collaborative, mission-driven culture. By clearly communicating these aspects, startups can attract and retain individuals who are aligned with

their vision and willing to engage with the dynamic, fast-paced environment typical of startup life (Dabirian et al., 2017; Hadi & Ahmed, 2018). This branding should highlight the company's fast-driven personality, innovative principles, and open work culture (Tumasjan et al., 2011). Furthermore, startups should focus on effectively *communicating their vision and values*, demonstrating to potential employees the tangible impact they could have within the company. *Transparency* about the company's mission and culture, as well as the opportunity for employees to be part of something transformative, is crucial in attracting candidates and retaining employees aligned with the startup's long-term goals (Chung & Parker, 2022). Additionally, open and transparent communication about the company's financial health and future prospects is essential in mitigating insecurity. Employees who understand the company's challenges and growth trajectory are more likely to remain committed, even during difficult periods (Rocha & Grilli, 2023). Moreover, startups that secure venture capital or financial backing can leverage these events by signalling stability and growth potential. This reassures employees of the company's viable future and helps attract and retain top talent (Dávila et al., 2003, Rocha & Grilli, 2023). In conclusion, recruiting and retaining talent in early-stage startups requires aligning the team with the company's vision through strategies like offering equity, fostering a strong culture, emphasizing employer branding, and maintaining transparency about financial health. These approaches boost commitment and reduce turnover. The following sections will explore the role of flexible work arrangements and dynamic roles in enhancing recruitment and retention.

#### 2.2.4 Flexible Work Arrangements

Flexibility is a key factor in both recruitment and employee retention, especially in early-stage startups where the ability to adapt quickly to changing circumstances is essential. Startups are often more agile than their larger counterparts and can offer employees a greater range of flexibility options, which significantly enhances recruitment and retention efforts. This

flexibility is highly attractive to modern employees, particularly those who prioritize work-life balance and value autonomy in their work (Sauermann, 2017; Rocha & Grilli, 2023). Flexibility in work schedules and location, which are formally known as *temporal flexibility* and *locational flexibility*, supports work-life integration, making startups appealing to a workforce increasingly seeking adaptable and balanced work environments (Rocha & Grilli, 2023; Aljazeera & Hamdan, 2023).

**Temporal flexibility**, or flexible work hours, allows employees to set their working hours within a specified range. For instance, this can include adjustable start and end times, compressed workweeks, or part-time arrangements (Raj et al., 2023). Startups, known for their agile cultures, can more easily implement these flexible schedules compared to larger firms bound by rigid structures. Temporal flexibility enables employees to synchronize professional and personal commitments while significantly boosting job satisfaction, lowering turnover rates, and attracting individuals who value autonomy over traditional work settings (Rocha & Grilli, 2023). Moreover, temporal flexibility aligns well with the results-oriented cultures typical of startups, where performance is measured by outcomes rather than hours logged, further enhancing employee engagement and satisfaction (Rocha & Grilli, 2023).

**Locational flexibility**, or the option for remote work, allows employees to work from locations outside the main office. The rise of remote work has transformed recruitment landscapes, enabling startups to access talent across diverse regions and overcome geographical barriers (Aljazeera & Hamdan, 2023; Raj et al., 2023). Locational flexibility increases recruitment success and retention by reducing commuting stress, lowering relocation needs, and providing employees with greater control over their work environments (Aljazeera & Hamdan, 2023). This is particularly attractive to individuals seeking better work-life balance (Rocha & Grilli, 2023). Startups that actively promote remote work in their branding and recruitment messaging

position themselves as attractive alternatives to traditional workplaces, especially for talent valuing flexibility and innovation in their roles (Roach & Sauermann, 2023).

Flexibility also plays a pivotal role in enhancing productivity and fostering innovation, two critical success factors for startups (Raj et al., 2023). For example, remote working, a key component of workplace flexibility, positively impacts firm performance by enabling employees to work during their most productive hours and from locations that maximize efficiency (Raj et al., 2023). Furthermore, communication technologies facilitate collaboration among geographically dispersed teams, integrating diverse perspectives and enhancing innovative output (Raj et al., 2023; Rocha & Grilli, 2023). A recent study highlights that promoting work-life balance while maintaining productivity through flexible work arrangements significantly improves organizational performance, underscoring the importance of autonomy and accessible technology (Raj et al., 2023).

Flexible work arrangements also provide employees with greater autonomy, allowing them to tailor their schedules and environments to suit personal needs and responsibilities (Capnary et al., 2018). This autonomy appeals to individuals seeking a stronger sense of control over their work-life balance while reducing stress linked to rigid schedules or commutes (Raj et al., 2023). Startups use these benefits to compete with larger firms, presenting flexibility as a key value proposition to attract talent (Capnary et al., 2018).

Challenges in implementing flexible work arrangements, however, must not be overlooked. For instance, maintaining communication and collaboration in remote settings can be challenging, particularly for millennials who value feedback and connectivity (Capnary et al., 2018; Raj et al., 2023). Additionally, blurred boundaries between work and personal life may leave employees feeling perpetually on-call or overburdened (Capnary et al., 2018). Research has shown that employees in some startups struggle to balance work and family responsibilities under flexible arrangements, which contributes to stress and reduced job satisfaction (Capnary

et al., 2018). To address these issues effectively, startups must carefully design their flexible work policies, emphasizing clear boundaries, robust communication, and balanced workloads (Raj et al., 2023). Flexibility in work hours and location is increasingly a top priority for job seekers, particularly among younger generations who prioritize autonomy and adaptability. Consequently, startups that incorporate flexible work arrangements in their recruitment and retention strategies experience increased interest from candidates seeking roles that support balanced lifestyles and personalized work conditions (Rocha & Grilli, 2023). This approach is advantageous for attracting highly skilled talent who might otherwise lean toward larger, more established firms (Sauermann, 2017). Flexible work options also positively impact retention by supporting employee well-being and reducing burnout, resulting in higher engagement and loyalty (Raj et al., 2023). By providing flexibility, startups enable employees to adjust their workloads to best support both productivity and personal life – an essential factor for thriving in the rapid shifts typical of early-stage environments (Rocha & Grilli, 2023). To conclude, incorporating flexible work arrangements helps startups attract and retain top talent by addressing employees' desires for autonomy, work-life balance, and adaptability. By leveraging flexibility as a core value and implementing thoughtful policies, startups can enhance engagement, productivity, and loyalty

### 2.2.5 Dynamic Roles with Development Opportunities

Unlike conventional corporate environments, where roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, startups embrace a more flexible approach characterized by *dynamic roles*. Tasks and responsibilities in these settings often evolve to meet the changing needs of the business (Sauermann, 2017). This dynamic environment of young ventures requires the personnel to navigate versatility and take on multiple roles, often working outside their formal job descriptions (Clegg & Spencer, 2006). Additionally, this concept aligns with organizational role fluidity, which emphasizes the growing importance of flexibility and adaptability in dynamic

environments where traditional organizational boundaries, structures, and processes become less prominent (Järvi et al., 2018; Kellogg et al., 2006; Schreyögg & Sydow, 2010). The opportunity to wear multiple hats not only fosters functional skills across diverse areas but also cultivates qualities that are invaluable in both *professional and personal growth* (Wybieralski, 2024; Goel, 2024). This theory is further supported by recent research by Clegg and Spencer (2006), which asserts: “Changes in job content that expand the role and responsibilities of job-holders allow them to develop new knowledge and skills, and these help explain why performance may improve” (p. 323).

Therefore, by highlighting values, such as early responsibility and purpose-driven work young ventures can attract candidates who are seeking an opportunity for development and ownership within an innovative, mission-driven environment (Tumasjan et al., 2011). However, while research on the direct impact of dynamic roles and associated development opportunities on recruitment and retention efforts of startups is limited, studies in established firms consistently indicate that development opportunities are generally perceived as an effective strategy for attracting and retaining talent (Schlechter et al., 2015; Society for Human Resource Management, 2022).

Dynamic roles within startups can be a significant driver of soft skills related to **personal growth**, by encouraging employees to take on responsibility that can directly influence the company’s trajectory. Young ventures can attract employees by offering a high degree of autonomy, as they are granting them ownership over projects and allowing them to make impactful decisions on their own from the very first moment (Roach & Sauermann, 2023, Goel, 2024, Sauermann, 2017). This level of responsibility often translates into greater self-confidence and independence, as employees develop problem-solving skills by working on complex issues with direct consequences for the business (Roach & Sauermann, 2023). The open structure of startups thus appeals to individuals who highly value responsibility and

agency (Sauermaun, 2017). Furthermore, the environment of cross-functional projects empowers employees to think creatively and proactively, enhancing their decision-making abilities and cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset that can serve them well in future roles (Sommer et al., 2016). Besides, personal growth is nurtured by the encouragement startups provide for employees to explore new ideas and take risks. Startups often operate with a results-oriented culture where employees are given the freedom to innovate and contribute unique perspectives, promoting a sense of ownership and pride in their work (Roach & Sauermaun, 2023). As employees become comfortable navigating uncertainty, they build resilience and adaptability, qualities that are crucial in various working environments (Andersson & Noseleit, 2009).

This concept of undefined roles found in startup positions can not only build personal competencies but also promote skills related to **professional growth** benefits in ways that traditional corporate environments rarely offer. With frequent exposure to cross-functional projects and close collaboration with founders or senior leaders, employees gain insights into different aspects of business strategy and operations (Sommer et al., 2016). The opportunity to engage in a wide range of functions allows employees to quickly acquire diverse skills, preparing them for leadership roles and enhancing their expertise across multiple domains (D'Acunto et al., 2020; Prommer et al., 2020). Furthermore, the exposure to high-impact projects along with the dynamic and fast-paced work environment helps employees build a comprehensive skill set that includes strategic thinking, operational insights, and decision-making under pressure. With such varied experience, employees gain confidence and competence that prepare them for diverse roles, whether within the startup or in future career opportunities (Lestari et al., 2023; Sommer et al., 2016). Moreover, with the small size, flat organizational structure, and rapid pace of development, young businesses often enable employees to take on higher-level positions and responsibilities much earlier in their careers

compared to more traditional, hierarchical organizations (Sauermann, 2017). Besides, startups often offer mentorship programs and ongoing training to enhance their employees' professional development (Goel, 2024). By investing in their employees' growth, startups can cultivate a more loyal and capable workforce that is committed to the company's long-term success (Roach & Sauermann, 2023). Nonetheless, wearing multiple hats as a startup employee can also lead to several challenges. As dynamic roles often come with role ambiguity and undefined expectations, it can create confusion and miscommunication among team members (Mañas et al., 2018). Employees may face difficulty in managing diverse tasks across different functions which can lead to inefficiencies and increased overwhelming stress (Rangrez et al., 2022). Additionally, the constant need to adapt to new roles and responsibilities may hinder employees from specializing in a particular area, limiting the depth of expertise they can develop (Kim & Jung, 2022). Over time, continuous change and ambiguity can thus affect the employees' morale and overall performance (Mañas et al., 2018). While startups thrive on flexibility and adaptability, addressing these challenges through clear communication, more defined priorities, and supportive structures is essential to ensure that employees remain engaged and effective (Men et al., 2021).

In summary, startups provide unique opportunities for personal and professional growth, attracting talent seeking more than financial rewards. Employees value challenging work, skill development, leadership roles, and purpose-driven environments, fostering job satisfaction and retention. The ability to shape roles, lead impactful projects, and contribute meaningfully builds loyalty and commitment, even when financial compensation is lower than in established firms (Rocha & Grilli, 2023; Sauermann, 2017).

#### 2.2.6 Theoretical Models in Employee Engagement

“Employee Engagement is that level of work commitment an employee holds toward the values and goals of the organization” (Pareek et al., 2019, p. 126). Fostering employee engagement is

critical for startups aiming to maintain a motivated and committed workforce in high-demand environments and enhance organizational performance (Pareek et al., 2019). Psychological theories, such as the **Self-Determination Theory (SDT)** established by Deci et al. (2017) and **Frederick Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory** (1959) provide valuable frameworks for understanding employee engagement in dynamic and high-pressure settings like startups.

**Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory** (1959) identifies two main dimensions that influence employee engagement and work satisfaction: *hygiene factors* and *motivators*. Effectively managing hygiene factors reduces staff dissatisfaction, while motivators create satisfaction by addressing individuals' desires for purpose and progress. Once hygiene issues are resolved, motivators enhance job satisfaction and boost performance. Hygiene factors, address issues such as company policies, supervision, fair compensation, interpersonal relations, and working conditions. While these factors do not directly create satisfaction, their absence can lead to *dissatisfaction*. For example, unclear policies or inadequate working conditions can frustrate employees, impacting morale and performance. In contrast, motivators, or *satisfiers*, drive satisfaction and performance by fulfilling intrinsic desires for purpose and growth. Key motivators include the nature of the work itself, opportunities for achievement, recognition, responsibility, and advancement. For instance, providing employees with meaningful roles and clear opportunities for advancement not only promotes satisfaction but also enhances their sense of purpose and alignment with organizational goals (Herzberg, 1959).

Besides Herzberg's Two Factor Theory, the **Self-Determination Theory (SDT)** emphasizes the fulfilment of three intrinsic psychological needs - autonomy, competence, and relatedness - all of which are crucial for employee well-being and engagement (Deci et al., 2017). In startups, employees often experience high autonomy due to smaller teams and close collaboration with leadership (Rocha & Grilli, 2023; Sauermann, 2017). This autonomy allows employees to take initiative and make impactful decisions (Roach & Sauermann, 2023). Moreover, fostering a

dynamic and respectful work environment strengthens relatedness, while providing skill development opportunities enhances competence (Deci et al., 2017; Andersson & Noseleit, 2009). Furthermore, these resources equip employees to navigate uncertainties and adapt more effectively to dynamic workplace demands, reinforcing their ability to remain engaged despite challenges (Clegg & Spencer, 2006; Andersson & Noseleit, 2009).

By addressing the psychological needs of employees through the principles of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory Model and SDT, startups can cultivate a supportive and engaging work environment. This integrated approach not only reduces stress but also enhances employees' sense of purpose and connection to the organization, fostering long-term loyalty and productivity (Men et al., 2021; Deci et al., 2017).

### **3. Methodology and Method**

This chapter outlines the research framework and methods employed in this paper, presenting a systematic approach to explore the interrelationship between flexible work arrangements and dynamic roles with development opportunities in influencing recruitment and retention in early-stage startups across the European market. The study incorporates two preliminary interviews with startup founders as a pilot phase to refine the survey design. These discussions shape the focus on flexible work arrangements and role fluidity, ensuring a targeted and comprehensive examination of the research questions while highlighting their practical relevance in the startup ecosystem.

#### **3.1 Methodology**

Understanding how flexible work arrangements and dynamic roles with development opportunities influence recruitment and retention in early-stage startups necessitates a structured and theory-driven methodology. This chapter outlines the methodology employed to investigate their impact on attracting and retaining talent in European startup environments.

### **Research Approach**

This study adopts a *deductive research approach*, which aligns with the objective of testing existing theories in the context of early-stage startups in Europe. Deductive reasoning involves evaluating premises derived from established theoretical frameworks and assessing their applicability in specific scenarios (Saunders et al., 2019). Theories related to human capital management, employee retention, and recruitment strategies form the theoretical basis for developing hypotheses about the impact of flexible work arrangements and dynamic roles with development opportunities on attracting and retaining talent. This approach is particularly suited for structured research, as it ensures that the study's variables are grounded in existing academic knowledge while addressing a specific research gap (Saunders et al., 2019). Moreover, this aligns seamlessly with the study's objective to explore under-researched areas and generate nuanced insights that extend existing theories of human capital management in startups. By integrating these frameworks, the research ensures a focused and theory-driven approach to understanding key factors in the startup ecosystem. To investigate these factors, a quantitative approach with a structured survey was employed. Surveys allow for the collection of quantifiable data on perceptions, preferences, and motivations, providing a comprehensive picture of trends across the European startup ecosystem (Bryman, 2016).

### **Research Design**

To investigate the relationships between flexible work arrangements and dynamic roles with development opportunities on recruitment and retention in early-stage startups, this study employs a *descriptive research design with elements of an explanatory analysis*. This approach is well-suited for systematically observing and reporting on these phenomena, offering a basis for identifying as well as assessing the correlations between variables without altering or influencing them (Malhotra & Grover, 1998). By exploring the ways in which these workplace practices are expressed and perceived in European early-stage startups, the descriptive design

allows the study to examine their potential influence on recruitment and retention outcomes, thereby addressing gaps in the existing literature on human capital management in startups. The quantitative, survey-based methodology complements this approach by collecting standardized data from a diverse group of participants, including individuals who are currently working, have previously worked, or are pursuing a job in this entrepreneurial field. This method enables the study to identify causal correlations between these diverse variables effectively and provides a robust empirical basis for further analysis (Malhotra & Grover, 1998). Furthermore, it allows for the systematic exploration of flexible work arrangements as well as dynamic roles with development opportunities, offering a nuanced understanding of their potential influence on recruitment and retention outcomes. By focusing on the relationships and interactions between these key variables, the explanatory research design allows the study to go beyond simple descriptions, offering actionable insights into the strategies startups can adopt to enhance recruitment and retention. Further details regarding the chosen research method will be discussed in the following chapter.

### **3.2 Method**

To address the research objectives, this chapter presents the methodological framework underpinning the study. It begins by detailing the data collection process, encompassing both primary and secondary data sources, to ensure a well-rounded approach to understanding the research topic. The chapter then outlines the purposive sampling strategy employed to target relevant participants, followed by a description of the survey design and structure, highlighting the tools and techniques used to capture quantitative insights. Lastly, the analytical methods are explained, showcasing how the data was processed and interpreted to derive meaningful conclusions about recruitment and retention practices in startups.

#### **Data Collection**

This research employs a mixed-method approach, combining *primary data* collection with *secondary data analysis* to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. By leveraging both data sources, the study aims to balance detailed, first-hand insights from individuals directly engaged in startups with broader contextual trends identified through academic literature. *Primary data* involves gathering data directly by the researcher, also referred to as first-hand data collection. Primary data is considered original and factual, as it has not been previously analysed or interpreted (Ajayi, 2017). The *primary data* for this research was obtained through a structured, quantitative survey designed to capture employee perspectives and experiences in European early-stage startups. The survey focused on measuring attitudes toward flexibility in work arrangements (e.g., temporal and locational flexibility) as well as dynamic roles (e.g., shifting roles, redefining responsibilities, more ownership) with development opportunities. This structured approach is aligned with the study's *deductive framework*, enabling the testing of hypotheses derived from established theories. To contextualize and enrich the primary findings, *secondary data* was gathered from scientific reports and case studies. Secondary data collection refers to the use of pre-existing data that has already been analysed and interpreted (Ajayi, 2017). This data provides an informational framework, offering insights into broader trends and challenges in startup human capital management. Furthermore, secondary sources are carefully selected to complement the survey data, ensuring a holistic understanding of the recruitment and retention strategies employed by startups.

### **Sampling**

The underlying study utilizes a *purposive sampling* method, a non-probabilistic approach where participants are deliberately selected based on specific characteristics that align with the research objectives. Purposive sampling was chosen to ensure that the participants had relevant experience or interest in early-stage startups, making them well-suited to provide insights into

the study's focus on recruitment and retention dynamics (Etikan et al., 2016). Participants were selected based on their fit for the survey, specifically their experience and interest in early-stage startups, whether as current employees, former employees, or individuals aspiring to work in such environments. This approach allowed the study to target individuals with direct knowledge or strong interest in startup environments, ensuring the data collected was relevant and informative.

Startups included in the study were defined as early-stage businesses operating for less than five years and employing fewer than 50 employees. This definition aligns with the study's focus on small, dynamic organizations, ensuring the findings are applicable to this unique business context. The survey was distributed electronically through targeted online platforms, including LinkedIn startup pages and Facebook groups dedicated to entrepreneurial communities, to facilitate broad accessibility and rapid collection of responses. Additionally, we leveraged professional contacts, personal networks, university networks such as the Nova Startup Student Club, and contacts from Venture Capital companies such as Earlybird Venture Capital. The survey was also promoted via startup blogs and websites to broaden its reach. These channels were chosen to effectively reach individuals who are actively engaged with or interested in the startup ecosystem, maximizing the relevance and quality of the responses. Ensuring anonymity in the survey design was a critical consideration to reduce social desirability bias and encourage honest feedback. The data collection period lasted for two weeks, from November 18th to December 1st of 2024. By focusing on participants with experience or interest in early-stage startups, this purposive sampling approach ensured the data captured perspectives directly relevant to the research objectives.

### **Survey Design and Structure**

The quantitative structured survey was conducted utilizing Google Forms as primary data collection platform. The aim was to collect numerical data to quantify the relationship between

two work practices in startup environments—namely, flexible work arrangements as well as dynamic roles with development opportunities—and their impact on recruitment and retention strategies. The survey employed *Multiple-Choice* as well as *Likert Scale questions*. Multiple-choice questions were used for demographic information as well as to provide structured response options to streamline data analysis and ensure consistency, while Likert scales were applied to attitudinal questions to provide statistical validity (Likert, 1932). Participants were asked to respond to questions on a Likert Scale designed to evaluate variables associated with flexible work arrangements, including temporal and locational flexibility, as well as dynamic roles that include opportunities for personal and career development. In addition to structured response options, the survey provided space to actively incorporate subjective opinions about workplace practices, enabling a richer understanding of participants' perspectives. The primary objective of this survey design and structure is to identify the underlying motivations that drive individuals to join startups and to develop strategic recommendations for startups to integrate these quantitative insights into their recruitment and retention practices.

### **Data Analysis**

The primary data collected in this study is analysed using *descriptive statistical techniques*, consistent with the *descriptive explanatory research design* employed. This focus allows for both summarizing observed phenomena and exploring relationships between variables, which aligns with the study's goal of understanding recruitment and retention dynamics in early-stage startups (Malhotra & Grover, 1998). Specifically, the descriptive analysis focuses on organizing, presenting, and interpreting data trends, while the explanatory component assesses the potential relationships between flexible work arrangements and dynamic roles with growth opportunities for employees (Bryman, 2016). To begin with, the survey responses are carefully reviewed for completeness and consistency. In cases where responses include significant

missing or invalid entries, these are excluded to maintain the reliability and validity of the analysis (Ajayi, 2017). Next, key descriptive statistics, such as percentages, are calculated to summarize the data. These statistics provide insights into general trends, such as the prevalence of temporal and locational flexibility preferences or variations in perceived personal and career development opportunities and role fluidity (Saunders et al., 2019). Data visualization techniques, including bar charts, pie charts, and histograms, are then employed to represent findings clearly and concisely, making patterns easier to identify (Bryman, 2016).

Overall, the descriptive explanatory analysis is particularly well-suited to the study's objectives, as it enables a comprehensive understanding of recruitment and retention practices in startups while simultaneously exploring their connections to employee motivations and outcomes (Malhotra & Grover, 1998). The findings are presented in the discussion chapter, with visualizations and summaries offering actionable insights and guidance into how startups can leverage flexible work arrangements as well as role fluidity with development opportunities to enhance their HRM strategies.

#### **4. Empirical Findings**

The empirical findings presented in this chapter are gathered through a structured survey designed to address the research questions outlined. By analysing this survey's data, this section investigates how flexible work arrangements as well as dynamic roles with development opportunities influence recruitment and retention in early-stage startups.

##### **4.1 Overview of Findings**

The survey collected responses from *104 participants*, representing a diverse and well-rounded sample in terms of age, gender, and professional experience in the *European startup ecosystem*. This diversity provides a robust foundation for analysing how offering flexible work arrangements and dynamic roles with development opportunities influence recruitment and retention in early-stage startups.

The largest **age group** comprises individuals aged *25 to 34* (49%), followed by those *under 25* (35.6%), demonstrating a strong reach among early-career professionals. Mid-career professionals aged *35 to 44* represents 15.4% of respondents, thereby contributing valuable experience to the dataset. No participants are aged *45 or above* (Figure 28). This range ensures applicability across a broad demographic, encompassing the perspectives of both emerging and seasoned professionals within the startup workforce.

**Gender representation** is balanced, with 51.9% identifying as *female* and 48.1% as *male* (Figure 29). Additionally, respondents are surveyed about their **connection to the startup sector**. Of the participants, 34.6% are *currently employed* in early-stage startups (fewer than 50 employees), 40.4% *previously worked* in such environments, and 25% are *actively seeking* employment in startups (Figure 1). This distribution captures diverse perspectives from those engaged in, transitioning from, or aspiring to enter the startup ecosystem.

In terms of **professional experience**, 45.2% of respondents report *one to two years* of startup experience, highlighting strong representation from early-career professionals. Additionally, 16.3% of respondents report *seven or more years* of experience, contributing insights from seasoned professionals with significant expertise. Meanwhile, 13.5% have *no prior experience*, reflecting the growing appeal of startups to newcomers (Figure 2). This wide spectrum ensures that the findings reflect of various stages in the startup career trajectory. By capturing insights from a diverse demographic and professional pool, this survey provides a solid basis for understanding the factors that influence recruitment and retention in early-stage startups. The diverse sample thereby enhances the study's validity and broad applicability within the dynamic startup ecosystem.

#### 4.2 Embracing Flexible Work Arrangements in Startups

This subsection examines the role of flexible work arrangements in startups, focusing on how current practices align with employees' preferences and priorities. It evaluates the importance

of temporal and locational flexibility in enhancing workplace satisfaction, productivity, and retention. By uncovering trends, addressing challenges, and identifying opportunities, this analysis provides insights into how startups can create adaptive work environments that support employee well-being while strengthening recruitment efforts and long-term commitment.

### **Current State of Flexible Work Arrangements**

The underlying survey data provides detailed insights into the types of flexible work arrangements startups currently offer. *Hybrid models*, allowing partial remote work, emerge as the most common option, cited by 62.5% of respondents. This reflects startups' recognition of the value of combining in-office collaboration with the autonomy of remote work. *Adjustable work hours* followed, reported by 34.6%, while *fully remote work* and *part-time options* are each offered by 24%. *Compressed workweeks*, such as four-day schedules, and the *absence of flexibility* are both rare, each mentioned by only 4.8% of participants (Figure 3).

In terms of employee preferences, 67.3% favour *hybrid models*, demonstrating a strong demand for this balanced approach. *Fully remote work* is the next most popular option, preferred by 55.8%, underscoring the growing appeal of locational flexibility. Similarly, *adjustable work hours* are desired by 51.9% of respondents, while *compressed workweeks* attract moderate interest at 34.6%. Notably, *part-time work* and *on-site work* options are the least favoured, preferred by only 18.3% and 16.3%, respectively (Figure 4). The gap between the availability of fully remote work and its high demand highlights a significant opportunity for startups to better align their offerings with workforce expectations.

### **The Role of Flexible Work Arrangements on Attracting and Retaining Talent**

Flexible work arrangements emerge as an essential factor in attracting and retaining talent, driven by employees' evolving preferences and priorities. The survey data reveals that the primary motivations for seeking flexibility stem from *improved work-life balance*, cited by 71.2% of respondents (Figure 9). This underscores a strong desire among employees to

harmonize their personal and professional responsibilities seamlessly. Furthermore, 63.5% of participants emphasise the *mental health benefits* of flexibility, illustrating its potential to alleviate stress and foster psychological well-being. A significant portion, 61.5%, also associates flexible work arrangements with *enhanced productivity*, suggesting that employees perceive autonomy over their schedules as a driver of focus and efficiency. Additionally, 53.8% note that flexibility contributes to *greater job satisfaction*, highlighting its role in fostering happiness and engagement in the workplace. Finally, 39.4% of respondents cite increased *control over work tasks*, pointing to the appeal of autonomy and empowerment in modern work environments (Figure 9). To gain deeper insights into the influence of flexible work arrangements, the impact of temporal and locational flexibility on attracting and retaining talent was thoroughly examined.

**Temporal flexibility**, such as adjustable work hours, proves to be a critical element in recruitment and retention strategies. Survey findings indicate that nearly two-thirds of respondents consider temporal flexibility essential when evaluating job opportunities. On a scale from 1 (*“not at all significant”*) to 5 (*“extremely significant”*), 38.5% rate temporal flexibility as a 4, and 26% rate it as a 5. These results highlight that flexible schedules significantly influence job seekers’ decisions. Fewer respondents rate it as *less important*, with 23.1% assigning a score of 3, 9.6% a 2, and only 2.9% a 1 (Figure 5). Moreover, temporal flexibility emerges as a key factor in sustaining employee engagement. On a scale from 1 (*“not important at all”*) to 5 (*“very important”*), 33.7% of participants rate it a 4, and 28.8% assign it the highest rating of 5. Combined, these responses indicate that nearly two-thirds of respondents view temporal flexibility as an essential aspect of their continued commitment to a startup. Additionally, 27.9% rate it as moderately important with a score of 3, while only 3.8% and 5.8% assign scores of 1 and 2, respectively, showing that temporal flexibility is rarely seen as unimportant (Figure 7). This indicates that employees highly value the ability to structure

their workday in ways that align with their individual needs, which in turn strengthens their loyalty to their employer. Temporal flexibility, by addressing these needs, helps startups build a committed and motivated workforce.

**Locational flexibility**, including the ability to work remotely, emerges as an even more influential factor. Survey results show that nearly three-quarters of participants rate it as *highly significant* in recruitment decisions, with 46.2% assigning it a 4 and 26.9% a 5 on a 5-point scale. Only a small fraction (5.8%) considers it *unimportant*, while 21.2% assign a *moderate importance* rating of 3 (Figure 6). This highlights the growing preference among job seekers for remote work options that provide geographic independence and autonomy. Similarly, locational flexibility is rated highly important as a retention factor, with over three-quarters of respondents indicating that it significantly influences their continued commitment to a startup. Specifically, 47.1% rate it as a 4, and 27.9% assign it the highest rating of 5. Another 18.3% rate it as *moderately important* with a score of 3, while only 6.8% combined give scores of 1 or 2, demonstrating that the vast majority of employees place significant value on locational flexibility (Figure 8).

These findings highlight a notable disparity between the flexibility employees seek and the options currently provided by startups. While both temporal and locational flexibility are highly valued, the unmet demand for fully remote options underscores the need for startups to better align their practices with employee expectations. Addressing this gap presents a critical opportunity for startups to attract and retain a satisfied and committed workforce.

### **Overall Impact on Satisfaction, Productivity, Retention, and Recruitment Preferences**

Flexible work arrangements have a profound impact on employee satisfaction, productivity, retention, and recruitment decisions, as highlighted by the survey data. A majority of respondents indicate that flexibility positively influences their workplace experience. 38.5% report it *significantly increases* satisfaction and productivity,

while 42.3% note a *slight improvement*, demonstrating its value in fostering engagement and efficiency. Only 15.4% feel it has no effect, and an even smaller minority (1%) suggest it may *decrease* these outcomes (Figure 12). These results underscore the strong link between flexible practices and positive employee performance metrics, emphasising the importance of flexibility in creating a supportive and effective work environment. Flexibility plays a pivotal role in attracting talent. When asked about the influence of job advertisements emphasizing flexible work arrangements, 33.7% of respondents state they will be *definitely* more inclined to apply, while 45.2% say they would *probably* consider it. Only a small proportion (16.3%) express *uncertainty*, and 5% indicate flexibility does *not influence* their decision (Figure 13). These findings suggest that promoting flexible policies in recruitment messaging can significantly enhance a startup's ability to appeal to top talent, particularly as workplace flexibility becomes a priority for many employees.

When weighing flexibility against higher compensation, 45.2% of respondents prefer *moderate pay with high flexibility*, while 36.5% value *both equally*. Only 18.3% choose *higher pay with limited flexibility*, indicating that while financial incentives remain important, flexibility often rivals or exceeds the appeal of higher compensation (Figure 14). This shift reflects evolving workplace priorities, where autonomy, work-life balance, and adaptability are increasingly central to job satisfaction.

The high percentage of employees considering leaving if flexible work arrangements are reduced further underscores the importance of this strategy in retaining talent. It reveals that 73.1% of respondents consider leaving the startup if such arrangements were reduced or removed, with 51% indicating they would *definitely* and 22.1% *probably* consider leaving. This indicates that nearly a quarter of employees would seriously contemplate leaving under such circumstances. Meanwhile, 19.2% are “not sure”, reflecting some uncertainty but highlighting the potential for dissatisfaction. Only 7.7% respond with “*probably no*”, showing that very few

employees would remain unaffected by such changes, and no respondents select “*definitely no*”, underscoring the near-universal importance of flexibility in maintaining employee satisfaction and loyalty (Figure 10). These findings emphasize the vital role of flexibility in shaping employee satisfaction, productivity, and loyalty. Startups that proactively align their practices with employee preferences for flexible work arrangements have a significant opportunity to enhance retention and strengthen their appeal to top talent.

### **Challenges Related to Flexibility**

Implementing flexible work arrangements in startup environments can be highly beneficial, yet it also brings substantial challenges. *Reduced team communication* is the most commonly reported issue, mentioned by 48.1%, thereby underscoring the difficulty in maintaining effective collaboration in remote or flexible setups. *Blurring boundaries between work and personal life*, identified by 46.2%, is another major concern, indicating that flexibility can sometimes lead to overwork or disruptions in personal time. *Feelings of isolation* are reported by 37.5%, highlighting the potential social and emotional drawbacks of remote or hybrid work environments. Other challenges include *difficulty managing work hours* (31.7%) and *lower visibility for promotions or career advancement* (32.7%), which reflect professional limitations associated with flexible arrangements. Additionally, 23.1% of respondents cite *dependence on reliable technology as a barrier*, emphasizing the need for robust digital infrastructure to support these setups effectively (Figure 12). Addressing the challenges of flexibility is essential for startups to fully realize its benefits while maintaining productivity and engagement. By resolving issues like communication barriers and role clarity, startups can seize the opportunity to align work arrangements with employee needs and expectations.

### **4.3 Exploring Dynamic Roles with Development Opportunities in Startups**

This subchapter explores the landscape of dynamic roles in startups, examining how current practices align with employee preferences and aspirations. It also explores employee

perspectives on the value of personal and professional development opportunities, highlighting their significance in shaping workplace satisfaction. By identifying trends, challenges, and opportunities, this analysis sheds light on how startups can balance role fluidity with growth opportunities to foster satisfying work environments that not only support individual growth and satisfaction but also enhance recruitment strategies and long-term employee retention.

### **Current State of Dynamic Roles**

Dynamic roles, characterized by the ability to shift roles, redefine responsibilities, and take on greater ownership, are a common feature in early-stage startups. Among the 104 respondents, 38.5% report encountering dynamic roles *occasionally*, while 30.8% state they *frequently* experience such flexibility in their roles. This indicates that nearly 70% of individuals working or having worked in startups are accustomed to dynamic role environments where responsibilities evolve over time. In contrast, 13.5% of respondents indicate *rare* exposure to dynamic roles (Figure 15).

When asked about their preferences for role structures, a majority (58.7%) express a desire for *moderately flexible roles*, which allow for some variation in tasks without frequent shifts in responsibilities. Approximately one-third (33.7%) prefer *highly flexible* roles, embracing environments where responsibilities and tasks change frequently. Only 7.7% indicate a preference for *rigid* roles with clearly defined tasks, suggesting that most individuals working in startups value adaptability to varying degrees (Figure 16).

These findings highlight the need for balance in startup role structures. While adaptability is valued, employees prefer roles that combine flexibility with some predictability. Addressing this gap presents an opportunity for startups to better align with employee expectations.

### **The Role of Personal Development in Attracting and Retaining Talent**

Dynamic roles in startups present opportunities for the development of soft skills and **personal growth**, which can have an essential impact on employee motivation, particularly in the

contexts of recruitment and retention. A majority of respondents (68.3%) identify *enhanced problem-solving skills* as the primary soft skill benefit gained through dynamic roles. This is closely followed by *increased self-confidence and ownership*, cited by 62.5% of participants. Resilience and adaptability, essential traits in dynamic startup environments, are also recognized by 55.8% as critical benefits. Other notable outcomes include *improved effective communication skills* (46.2%), *exposure to innovation and risk-taking* (44.2%), and *enhanced team collaboration* (41.3%) (Figure 17). These findings suggest that role fluidity supports the cultivation of valuable soft skills and competencies, which are particularly attractive to employees seeking growth-oriented environments. This is further reflected in the responses to the question regarding the extent to which personal growth benefits influence decisions to apply for startup roles. The responses measure on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates that personal growth benefits are “*not at all significant*” and 5 represents “*extremely significant*”. Here, 68.3% of participants rate these benefits as *highly significant* (scores of 4 and 5), emphasizing the role of growth opportunities in attracting talent to startups. Conversely, 31.7% of respondents rate these benefits as *less significant* (scores of 1 to 3), with only 1% selecting a score of 1 (Figure 18). This demonstrates that while the majority recognizes the value of such opportunities, a small group of participants perceive them as less critical.

The importance of soft skills and personal growth benefits extends beyond recruitment to influence long-term retention. When asked about the significance of these benefits to long-term commitment, 76% of respondents rate them as *important* or *extremely important* (scores of 4 or 5) on a scale from 1 (“*not at all important*”) to 5 (“*extremely important*”). Meanwhile, 24% consider them as *less important* (scores of 1 to 3), with only 1% selecting 1 (Figure 19). These results highlight the strong alignment between employees’ aspirations for ongoing development and the dynamic, growth-oriented nature of startup roles.

### **The Role of Professional Development in Attracting and Retaining Talent**

Besides personal growth, dynamic roles in startups provide employees with significant opportunities for skill development related to **professional growth**, contributing to their motivation and satisfaction. Among the respondents, 58.7% highlight *expanded knowledge across business functions* as a key benefit of role fluidity, demonstrating its ability to offer cross-functional exposure that enhances employees' overall understanding of organizational operations. *Leadership development and team management* are identified as critical benefits by 55.8% of participants, underlining the potential for startups to cultivate leadership skills early in their careers. *Faster career progression*, driven by the flat and dynamic structures typical of startups, is cited by 52.9% as a major advantage, reflecting the appeal of accelerated pathways to senior positions. *Greater job autonomy and responsibility*, a hallmark of startup environments, is recognized by 48.1% of respondents, indicating that dynamic roles foster a sense of ownership and independence in employees. Additionally, 40.4% identify the development of *strategic thinking skills* as a benefit, while 36.5% emphasize *improved decision-making abilities*. *Project management skills* (27.9%) are also noted as valuable growth opportunities, underscoring the breadth of professional competencies employees can develop in adaptable roles (Figure 20).

The significance of these professional growth benefits is reflected in their influence on recruitment decisions. When asked to what extent such benefits affect their decision to apply for a startup role, 70.2% of respondents rate them as *significant* or *extremely significant* (scores of 4 or 5) on a scale where 1 represents “*not at all significant*” and 5 represents “*extremely significant*”. On the other hand, 29.8% consider these benefits as *less significant* (scores of 1 to 3), with only 1% selecting 1 (Figure 21). This suggests that while the majority emphasize professional skill development as a priority, a smaller group of respondents assigns comparatively less importance to these benefits in their decision-making process.

Professional skill benefits also play a pivotal role in long-term employee retention. On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents “*not important at all*” and 5 indicates “*very important*”, 78.8% of respondents rate professional growth benefits as *highly important* (scores of 4 or 5) to their decision to remain committed to a startup over time. Conversely, 21.2% perceive these benefits as *less significant* (scores of 1 to 3), indicating that while the majority value professional growth opportunities as a key factor in long-term commitment, a smaller proportion assigns less importance to these benefits (Figure 22).

Overall, dynamic roles in startups serve as a critical driver of both recruitment and retention by offering employees diverse and accelerated professional skill development opportunities.

### **Overall Impact on Satisfaction, Productivity, and Recruitment Preferences**

Role fluidity demonstrates a broadly positive impact on employee satisfaction in startups. On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates that dynamic roles impact job satisfaction “*very negatively*” and 5 represents they impact it “*very positively*”, nearly 70% of respondents rate its influence as favourable, with 45.2% assigning a score of 4 and 24% awarding the highest score of 5. This highlights the positive role that adaptable responsibilities play in enhancing job satisfaction in startups. Additionally, 24% of respondents consider the impact of dynamic roles as *neutral* (score of 3), indicating that while they may not find it overwhelmingly positive, they still recognize its moderate influence on job satisfaction. This suggests that the ability to adapt roles and responsibilities significantly enhances overall job satisfaction for the majority of individuals working in dynamic startup environments. Only a small minority (6.7%) cites slightly *negative* experiences (score of 2), and no respondents indicate that dynamic roles impact their job satisfaction *very negatively* (score of 1) (Figure 23).

Beyond individual satisfaction, dynamic roles are also found to have a positive influence on broader measures such as job satisfaction and productivity. Among respondents, 47.1% note that role fluidity *slightly increases* these metrics, while 26% report a *significant increase*. This

indicates that over 70% of participants view role fluidity as a contributing factor to both higher satisfaction and productivity. By contrast, 20.2% believe dynamic roles have *no impact*, and only a small fraction (6.7%) reports a *decrease in both* satisfaction and productivity (Figure 25). The appeal of dynamic roles extends to recruitment, with nearly 70% of respondents indicating that they would be more inclined to join a startup if its job advertisements emphasized flexible roles, tasks, and ownership. Of these, 24% express a *definitive preference*, stating they will “*definitely*” be more likely to consider such roles, while 43.3% will “*probably*” do so. This demonstrates the importance of role flexibility as a key differentiator in attracting top talent in competitive labour markets. Only 32.7% of participants are either *unsure* (26.9%) or *unlikely* (5.8%) to consider startups offering flexible roles, further emphasizing the strong draw of role fluidity in recruitment efforts (Figure 26).

When asked to weigh the relative importance of compensation and dynamic roles, a significant proportion of respondents (44.2%) prioritizes *moderate compensation paired with high role flexibility*. This suggests that for many individuals, the opportunity to engage in dynamic roles outweighs the allure of purely financial incentives. Another 30.8% place *equal importance on compensation and dynamic roles*, further underscoring the value of flexibility in workplace decision-making. By contrast, only 25% *prefer significantly higher compensation with limited role flexibility*, highlighting the preference for roles that offer both adaptability and personal growth opportunities (Figure 27).

### **Challenges Associated with Dynamic Roles**

While dynamic roles offer numerous advantages, their implementation in startup environments comes with significant challenges. The most reported challenge, cited by 58.7% of respondents, is the *lack of role clarity and defined expectations*. More than half of the participants (53.8%) point to *increased workloads* caused by overlapping tasks as a significant challenge. In environments where employees are expected to wear multiple hats, workloads can quickly

become unmanageable. Another commonly reported challenge, noted by 44.2% of respondents, is the *difficulty of prioritizing tasks across different functions*. Employees in startups are often required to handle diverse responsibilities, which can complicate the process of determining which tasks should take precedence. Approximately 32.7% of respondents highlight the *challenge of managing diverse responsibilities*. Employees who are expected to operate across multiple functions may find it difficult to perform consistently across areas outside their expertise. Role fluidity often requires employees to adapt to shifting expectations and responsibilities, which can be overwhelming. About 30.8% of respondents report *feeling overwhelmed by the constant changes* associated with dynamic roles. For 27.9% of respondents, dynamic roles come at the expense of the ability to specialize in specific areas (Figure 24). While some employees thrive in dynamic roles, others may prefer to develop deep expertise in a particular field. These findings indicate that, although employees greatly value dynamic roles, startups must address the challenges they present to maintain productivity and engagement.

## **5. Discussion**

This section builds upon the findings of this study to offer actionable managerial recommendations for early-stage startups. By leveraging their inherent agility, startups can resonate with modern workforce priorities such as autonomy, growth, and flexibility. The recommendations focus on the unique advantages of flexible work arrangements and dynamic roles, outlining strategies to enhance recruitment and retention efforts while building an engaged and resilient workforce. These insights are grounded in empirical findings and theoretical frameworks, offering practical steps to bridge the gap between current practices and workforce expectations (Figure 34).

### **5.1 Aligning Workforce Expectations**

Early-stage startups play a critical role in driving innovation and fostering economic growth, yet they often face considerable challenges in recruiting and retaining talent (Dash et al., 2022;

European Commission, 2021). As prior research highlights, these challenges stem from resource constraints, a lack of job security, and limited brand visibility, all of which make startups less competitive in the labour market compared to established firms (Sauermann, 2017). Nevertheless, startups have a unique opportunity to leverage their inherent agility to align organizational offerings with the evolving preferences of the modern workforce. By addressing the gap between current practices and employee expectations, startups can position themselves as attractive employers in an increasingly competitive market.

The empirical findings reveal a significant disparity between the flexible work arrangements and dynamic roles currently offered by early-age startups and the preferences expressed by non-entrepreneurial employees. This discrepancy suggests a clear opportunity for young businesses to address this gap, thereby enhancing their efficiency in recruitment and retention strategies. According to the survey, while 62.5% of respondents state their startups offer hybrid work options, a higher 67.3% express a preference for this model, indicating a slight misalignment. The gaps are even more pronounced when it comes to fully remote work and flexible hours. Only 24% of participants report that their startups offer fully remote work options, despite 55.8% indicating a preference for this level of flexibility. Similarly, while 51.9% of employees favour adjustable working hours, only 34.6% say their startups provide this option. These gaps highlight untapped opportunities for nascent companies to better meet employee expectations by expanding locational and temporal flexibility. The demand for compressed workweeks (34.6%) also surpasses its current availability (4.8%), suggesting that innovative scheduling solutions could further enhance recruitment and retention efforts (Figure 30).

In terms of dynamic roles, the survey reveals that nearly 70% of respondents have experienced some degree of role flexibility, with 30.8% encountering it frequently and 38.5% engaging with this phenomenon on a regular basis. Importantly, the findings indicate that the majority of employees (58.7%) prefer moderately flexible roles, which allow for some variation in tasks

without frequent shifts in responsibilities. However, 33.7% of respondents express enthusiasm for highly adaptable roles, highlighting a significant portion of the workforce that values environments with frequent changes and evolving responsibilities. Only 7.7% indicate a preference for rigid role structures, suggesting that flexibility is a widely appreciated aspect of startup culture. These insights underscore the opportunity for early-stage startups to leverage their dynamic nature to offer roles that align with non-entrepreneurial employee preferences, creating an environment that encourages both growth and innovation while maintaining a level of consistency (Figure 31).

Theoretical frameworks reinforce the importance of addressing these gaps. Research demonstrates that effective human capital management is a cornerstone of startup success. As highlighted by Braun et al. (2017), startups' ability to attract and retain skilled talent directly impacts their innovation capacity and scalability. Rocha and Grilli (2023) further affirm this as they highlight early-stage hiring as a vital indicator of a startup's growth through enhanced human capital. However, the inherent uncertainty and limited resources of early-stage ventures necessitate a strategic focus on aligning organizational practices with employee priorities. Startups' agility, often seen as a limitation, can be leveraged as a strength by offering tailored work design and growth opportunities that meet workforce demands. To summarize, early-stage startups must bridge the gap between employee preferences and current practices. By expanding access to fully remote options, adjustable hours, and compressed workweeks, startups can better align with modern workforce expectations. Similarly, by providing moderately flexible roles that balance adaptability with predictability, startups can cater to the diverse needs of their employees. These strategies not only enhance recruitment and retention but also position startups as innovative and employee-centric organizations, driving long-term growth and success.

Early-stage startups must address the gap between employee preferences and current practices by offering fully remote options, adjustable hours, and compressed work weeks. Providing moderately flexible roles that balance adaptability, and predictability can further align with diverse workforce needs. These strategies enhance recruitment and retention while positioning startups as innovative, employee-focused organizations, promoting long-term stability and impact.

## 5.2 Strengthening Startup Culture and Employer Branding

Establishing and cultivating a **unique company culture** has become a critical approach for attracting and retaining talent in startup environments. Characterized by a flat organizational structure, close-knit teams, and high levels of collaboration, startup cultures significantly enhance employee engagement and job satisfaction (Rocha & Grilli, 2023; Sauermann, 2017). Non-entrepreneurial employees are more likely to remain loyal to companies where their contributions are valued, and the organizational culture aligns with their personal values (Sauermann, 2017). In early-stage startups, where structures must be fluid and roles often lack rigid definitions, fostering a strong culture becomes particularly crucial (Roach & Sauermann, 2023).

The adoption of *flexible work arrangements* represents one way startups can enhance their culture. Flexibility in work schedules and locations has a profound impact on employee satisfaction, productivity, retention, and recruitment decisions. Survey data supports this: 38.5% of respondents report a significant increase in satisfaction and productivity due to flexible arrangements, while 42.3% note a slight improvement (Figure 12). This underscores the importance of flexibility in creating a supportive and effective work environment. Furthermore, when employees were asked to choose between higher compensation and flexible work arrangements, 45.2% prioritize flexibility over financial rewards, with another 36.5% valuing both equally (Figure 14). These findings indicate that flexibility rivals or even surpasses

financial incentives in its appeal, making it a critical component of a culture that attracts and retains top talent.

*Dynamic roles* also play a vital role in shaping company culture. Startups often require employees to wear multiple hats and adapt to changing responsibilities, promoting an environment of innovation and continuous learning (Bonesso et al., 2020). The survey results show that 47.1% of respondents believe role fluidity slightly increases job satisfaction and productivity, while 26% report a significant increase. This demonstrates that more than 70% of employees view dynamic roles as a positive influence on their workplace experience (Figure 25). Dynamic roles empower employees by allowing them to engage in meaningful work, directly contribute to the company's success, and experience personal growth—all of which align with the collaborative and fast-paced ethos of startup culture. The trade-off between financial incentives and dynamic roles further highlights their value. While compensation remains important, 44.2% of respondents prefer moderate pay with high role flexibility, and 30.8% value both equally (Figure 27). This indicates that the opportunity to work in adaptable, growth-oriented roles is often more appealing than higher pay with rigid role definitions.

The interplay between flexible work arrangements, dynamic roles, and company culture creates a mutually reinforcing relationship. Young ventures that prioritize flexibility and adaptability not only build environments where employees thrive but also enhance their organizational culture. These practices foster a sense of trust, innovation, and engagement, which are critical for attracting and retaining talent and driving long-term success. By emphasizing flexible work arrangements and dynamic roles, startups can create cultures that resonate with employees' values and expectations, ensuring sustained growth and a competitive edge in the talent market. In a competitive job market, building a **strong employer brand** is essential for nascent companies effectively attract and retain top talent. Early-stage startups face unique challenges, including limited resources, job insecurity, and competition from larger, more established firms

with greater brand recognition (Rocha & Grilli, 2023). Effective employer branding enables young businesses to stand out by highlighting unique value propositions such as opportunities for growth, innovation, and a collaborative, mission-driven culture (Laumer et al., 2014). By clearly communicating these elements, startups can attract individuals who align with their vision and thrive in the fast-paced and dynamic environment of a startup (Dabirian et al., 2017; Hadi & Ahmed, 2018). Two critical elements that enhance employer branding are flexible work arrangements and dynamic roles, both of which appeal to modern priorities and preferences. Flexibility in the workplace has become a key driver in talent attraction. Survey results reveal that 79% of respondents are more inclined to apply for positions that emphasize *flexible work arrangements*, with 33.7% definitively stating their preference (Figure 13). These findings highlight how workplace flexibility, including remote work options, adaptable schedules, and hybrid work models, is increasingly seen as a baseline expectation among job seekers. Startups that incorporate flexibility into their employer branding not only cater to employee demands but also reinforce their image as innovative and employee-centric organizations. Flexibility addresses employees' desire for work-life balance while reflecting the adaptive and forward-thinking mindset that is often at the heart of an early-stage startup's culture.

*Dynamic roles*, characterized by shifting responsibilities, opportunities for ownership, and the freedom to redefine roles as needed, also serve as a strong attractor for prospective employees (Sauermann, 2017). These roles enhance diverse skill sets while fostering both personal and professional growth (Clegg & Spencer, 2006). Nearly 70% of respondents express a preference for startups that emphasize role fluidity in their job advertisements, with 24% definitively stating their interest. These findings demonstrate the appeal of dynamic roles as a key differentiator in recruitment efforts (Figure 26). Early-Stage startups inherently operate in environments of constant change and innovation, which naturally lends itself to dynamic roles. Non-entrepreneurial employees are often given significant opportunities for personal and

professional growth, skill diversification, and meaningful contributions to the organization's success. By highlighting the flexibility and ownership offered in their roles, startups can position themselves as workplaces that value personal and professional development, further enhancing their employer brand.

Emphasizing flexible work arrangements and dynamic roles strengthens startups' employer branding, aligning with modern employee preferences while showcasing cultural strengths like innovation and agility. Integrating these elements into recruitment messaging helps attract and retain talent, setting early-stage startups apart in competitive labour markets and supporting long-term success.

### **5.3 Enhancing Employee Engagement through Flexibility in Work arrangements and Dynamic roles**

Employee engagement reflects the commitment and alignment employees feel toward an organization's values and goals. For early-stage startups operating in high-demand and fast-paced environments, fostering this engagement is vital to maintaining a motivated workforce and achieving superior organizational performance (Pareek et al., 2019). Psychological frameworks such as **Frederick Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory** and **Self-Determination Theory (SDT)** offer valuable insights into enhancing engagement, particularly in dynamic and high-pressure settings (Deci et al., 2017; Herzberg, 1959). Dynamic roles and flexible work arrangements in early-stage startups create a balanced work environment by addressing both hygiene factors and intrinsic motivators (*satisfiers*), as outlined in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. Hygiene factors are essential for minimizing *dissatisfaction*, while intrinsic motivators drive job satisfaction and engagement (Herzberg, 1959). Besides, these principles align closely with SDT, which highlights the fulfilment of three intrinsic psychological needs - autonomy, competence, and relatedness - as crucial for employee well-being and engagement (Deci et al., 2017). Startups leverage these two dimensions to enhance employee satisfaction and well-being as well as create an environment where employees can thrive.

In the context of *flexible work arrangements*, challenges such as unclear boundaries between work and personal life, feelings of isolation, and communication difficulties reflect potential dissatisfiers that arise when hygiene factors, such as adequate support structures and communication systems, are not properly addressed (Herzberg, 1959, Figure 11). To address these challenges, early-stage startups need to carefully design their flexible work policies, emphasize robust communication practices, and clearly define boundaries with balanced workloads (Rocha & Grilli, 2023). Simultaneously, flexible work arrangements serve as a strong motivator by enabling employees to customize their schedules and decide their working hours or location. This approach addresses intrinsic needs for autonomy, independence, and work-life balance, also aligning with SDT principles (Deci et al., 2017). Temporal flexibility, such as adjustable work hours, empowers employees to align their professional responsibilities with personal priorities, encouraging ownership and satisfaction (Rocha & Grilli, 2023). Locational flexibility, such as the ability to work remotely, provides employees with the freedom to choose their work environment, which not only enhances productivity but also fosters a sense of trust and value as their preferences are respected (Aljazeera & Hamdan, 2023). These arrangements enhance *autonomy* and *competence* by providing employees with the freedom to optimize their productivity.

With respect to *dynamic roles*, challenges like role ambiguity, heavy workloads, and feeling overwhelmed highlight potential dissatisfiers that arise when hygiene factors, such as appropriate working conditions, are not efficiently managed (Herzberg, 1959; Figure 24). To mitigate these challenges, startups must focus on clear communication and supportive structures, such as Mentorship and training programs to help employees navigate their responsibilities more structured and confidently, without feeling overwhelmed (Men et al., 2021; Roach & Sauermann, 2023). At the same time, dynamic roles serve as a powerful motivator, fulfilling intrinsic needs for *autonomy*, *competence*, and responsibility (Deci et al.,

2017). Dynamic roles, characterized by shifting responsibilities and adaptability, allow non-entrepreneurial employees to take ownership of impactful projects, nurturing purpose and recognition as their contributions directly shape the organization's success (Sauermann, 2017). Moreover, dynamic roles encourage personal and professional growth by enhancing problem-solving, resilience, as well as leadership skills. These opportunities empower employees with self-confidence, a sense of ownership, and alignment with organizational goals (Figure 17). Professional growth opportunities, such as cross-functional exposure and leadership development, provide employees with pathways to faster career progression and strategic skill-building (Figure 20). These opportunities highlight how dynamic roles foster autonomy by allowing employees to take on ownership from the very beginning, enhance competence through skill development and problem-solving, and strengthen relatedness by encouraging collaboration and leadership in diverse, cross-functional settings (Roach & Sauermann, 2023; Sauermann, 2017).

Together, dynamic roles and flexible work arrangements create a workplace that supports autonomy, responsibility, and purpose. Flexible work arrangements and dynamic roles with development opportunities enhance employee satisfaction and overall well-being by activating intrinsic motivators such as autonomy and recognition to cultivate a more fulfilling and engaging work environment. This creates a workplace that not only attracts top talent but also retains a committed and engaged workforce, ultimately driving organizational advancement and resilience.

#### **5.4 Managerial Recommendations for Recruitment and Retention in Early-stage Startups**

Work design is central to early-stage startups' recruitment and retention strategies, aligning organizational practices with workforce expectations. Leveraging flexible arrangements and dynamic roles enhancing employee satisfaction, engagement, and commitment (Rocha & Grilli, 2023; Sauermann, 2017).

### **Leveraging Flexible Work Arrangements**

Flexible work arrangements provide startups with a crucial mechanism to align their practices with modern workforce priorities, particularly in attracting and retaining talent (Rocha & Grilli, 2023; Aljazeera & Hamdan, 2023). Survey findings indicate that *temporal flexibility*, such as adjustable work hours or compressed workweeks, significantly influences both recruitment and retention, with 64.5% of respondents rating it as “very significant” or “extremely significant” when considering job applications (Figure 5). Furthermore, 73.1% emphasize the importance of *locational flexibility*, including remote work options, in their decision to apply for startup roles (Figure 6). These preferences clearly underscore the growing demand for adaptable work environments that meet employees’ needs for both autonomy and work-life balance (Rocha & Grilli, 2023). The importance of flexible arrangements is further reinforced by human capital theory, which highlights the strategic advantage of aligning organizational practices with workforce expectations to drive engagement and loyalty (Rocha & Grilli, 2023). Temporal flexibility, for instance, allows employees to better synchronize their personal and professional responsibilities, fostering greater job satisfaction and sustained commitment. This is evident from the survey, where 62.5% of respondents rate *temporal flexibility* as “very important” or “extremely important” to their continued engagement with their organization (Figure 7). Likewise, *locational flexibility* has an even stronger influence, with 75% of participants citing it as a critical factor in their decision to remain with their employer (Figure 8). These findings collectively highlight how flexible work environments serve as a compelling motivator for non-entrepreneurial employees, enhancing both recruitment appeal and retention outcomes.

Additionally, survey results reveal the key drivers behind employees’ preference for flexible work arrangements. Improved work-life balance, cited by 71.2% of respondents, emerged as the most frequently identified benefit, closely followed by better mental health (63.5%), enhanced job satisfaction (53.8%), and increased productivity (61.5%) (Figure 9). These

motivators resonate strongly with the dynamic nature of early-stage startups, which require agile and engaged teams to thrive. By emphasizing these benefits in their employer branding and recruitment strategies, startups can effectively differentiate themselves in competitive labour markets (Rocha & Grilli, 2023; Sauermann, 2017). This approach not only attracts talent who value autonomy and adaptability but also positions startups as progressive workplaces that align with the evolving priorities of modern professionals (Figure 32; Sauermann, 2017).

In summary, flexible work arrangements serve as a powerful tool for early-stage startups to inspire and engage their workforce. By meeting employees' desires for autonomy, balance, and personal well-being, these practices foster an environment that enhances recruitment success and promotes long-term commitment. Startups that prioritize flexibility in their work design are likely to benefit from a more satisfied and motivated workforce, positioning themselves for sustainable growth and prosperity (Rocha & Grilli, 2023; Raj et al., 2023).

### **Utilizing Dynamic Roles with Development Opportunities**

Dynamic roles in early-stage startups offer a compelling opportunity to attract and retain talent by emphasizing personal and professional development within a flexible and fast-paced work environment (Clegg & Spencer, 2006). Unlike traditional corporate structures, startups thrive on role fluidity, allowing employees to take on diverse responsibilities and actively contribute to the organization's growth (Sommer et al., 2016).

Dynamic roles provide significant opportunities for *personal growth*, a highly valued factor among non-entrepreneurial employees and job seekers. Survey results indicate that 68.3% of respondents identify enhanced problem-solving skills as the most significant soft skill gained through such roles. Other critical motivators include increased self-confidence and ownership (62.5%), resilience and adaptability (55.8%), and improved communication and collaboration skills (46.2%) (Figure 17). These personal development opportunities align closely with the aspirations of individuals, looking for environments that foster creativity, innovation, and self-

improvement (Tumasjan et al., 2011). The preference for personal growth in recruitment and retention efforts is further reinforced by the fact that 68.3% of respondents rating it as a critical factor in their decision to apply for startup roles (Figure 18). Furthermore, the impact of personal development extends beyond recruitment to long-term retention, as 76% of respondents indicate that these benefits were important or extremely important to their decision to remain with a startup (Figure 19). Early-stage startups can capitalize on these aspects by positioning themselves as growth-oriented workplaces in their employer branding efforts. Their messaging should clearly emphasize the ways in which dynamic roles nurture creativity, problem-solving abilities, and resilience, which are qualities that are essential for navigating the challenges of startup environments.

Beyond personal growth, dynamic roles in startups provide exceptional opportunities for *professional development*, equipping employees with skills that enhance their career trajectories. Survey respondents highlight several critical benefits, including expanded cross-functional knowledge (58.7%), leadership and team management skills (55.8%), and faster career progression (52.9%). Other valuable outcomes include greater autonomy and responsibility (48.1%), as well as the development of strategic thinking and decision-making skills (Figure 20). These unique motivators make young companies particularly appealing to individuals seeking meaningful growth, impactful contributions, and hands-on learning experiences, making it a cornerstone of effective recruitment and retention strategies (Tumasjan et al., 2011). Professional growth opportunities are highly significant in influencing recruitment decisions, with 70.2% of respondents rating them as important or extremely important when applying for startup roles (Figure 21). This preference also plays a pivotal role in retention, as 78.8% of respondents consider professional growth benefits crucial to their long-term commitment to a startup (Figure 22). Early-stage startups can capitalize on these growth opportunities by showcasing their capacity to provide tangible benefits, including strong

leadership development, cross-functional collaboration, and the chance to contribute to impactful, high-visibility projects in their job advertisement. Ultimately, to strengthen employee retention, startups should prioritize continuous personal and professional development by providing opportunities to take ownership of meaningful projects, fostering a culture of innovation and supporting adaptability to different challenges. This sustained focus helps to create an engaged and loyal workforce that is invested in the company's success (Figure 33).

In summary, these preferences underline the rising demand for dynamic roles that address employees' desires for personal and professional development. For early-stage startups, cultivating such roles represents a strategic asset in motivating and engaging their workforce. By addressing employees' needs for autonomy, accountability, and continuous development, startups can foster a supportive organizational culture that enhances talent acquisition and strengthens long-term employee commitment. Moreover, incorporating these principles into employer branding strategies enables startups to differentiate themselves in competitive labour markets (Rocha & Grilli, 2023; Sauermann, 2017).

## **6. Conclusion and Future Outlook**

This thesis explores the role of flexible work arrangements and dynamic roles with development opportunities in attracting and retaining non-entrepreneurial employees in European early-stage startups. The research aims to address how workplace practices align with the evolving preferences of modern employees, offering actionable insights for startup operating in competitive labour markets. However, findings reveal a discrepancy between what employee's desire and what startups currently provide, both in terms of flexible work arrangements and dynamic roles. For flexible work arrangements, this is particularly evident with fully remote options, where demand significantly outweighs availability. Similarly, for dynamic roles, there is a notable gap between employee expectations for moderate structured roles with growth

opportunities and the realities of startup environments. Addressing these gaps offers a critical opportunity for startups to better align their practices with workforce needs, thereby strengthening their ability to attract and retain talent. To fulfil this purpose, the study explores two research questions.

*RQ1: “How do flexible work arrangements (e.g., remote work, adjustable hours) affect employee recruitment and retention in early-stage startups?”*

Flexible work arrangements, encompassing locational flexibility (e.g., hybrid and remote models) and temporal flexibility (e.g., adjustable hours and compressed workweeks), are identified as significant drivers of recruitment and retention in early-stage startups. Employees highly value the autonomy and balance these arrangements provide, which, in turn, enhance job satisfaction, engagement, and productivity. Specifically, locational flexibility, such as hybrid work, offers employees the freedom to choose their work environment, thereby reducing stress and improving work-life balance. Furthermore, regular in-person team-building activities within hybrid models help strengthen interpersonal connections while retaining the benefits of remote work. Similarly, temporal flexibility, including adjustable hours and compressed workweeks, empowers employees to align their schedules with personal priorities, fostering both satisfaction and commitment. However, challenges such as communication barriers, blurred work-life boundaries, and feelings of isolation do arise. To address these, startups can implement clear policies and supportive practices, effectively integrating flexible work arrangements into their recruitment and retention strategies. Startups should consider the following:

- Highlight flexibility in job descriptions by using clear, appealing language to outline hybrid or remote options and flexible schedules, emphasizing work-life balance and autonomy.

- Provide structured guidelines for work-life balance by establishing policies on working hours, communication norms, and expected availability to support employee well-being.
- Organize regular team-building activities to strengthen interpersonal relationships within hybrid work models through periodic in-person gatherings.
- Offer customizable scheduling options to enable employees to adapt work hours or adopt compressed workweeks to align with their personal needs and maintain productivity.
- Enhance employer branding through flexibility by using testimonials and success stories to showcase the benefits of flexible arrangements, reinforcing the company's progressive culture and appeal.

*RQ2: “How do dynamic roles (e.g., the ability to shift or redefine roles) with development opportunities affect employee recruitment and retention in early-stage startups?”*

Dynamic roles, characterized by shifting responsibilities and greater ownership, are identified as key drivers of recruitment and retention. The inherent development opportunities of these roles drive personal and professional growth while serving as powerful motivators that attract top talent and ensure long-term commitment to the company. Dynamic roles foster personal growth by helping employees build essential soft skills such as problem-solving, adaptability, and effective communication, while also enhancing self-confidence, and resilience. At the same time, these roles provide valuable opportunities for professional development leadership experience, cross-functional exposure, and strategic skill-building, enabling greater autonomy, and improved decision-making abilities. Employees value this autonomy and ownership inherent in dynamic roles, as they align with their job satisfaction and aspirations to contribute to an impactful environment. Nonetheless, challenges such as role ambiguity and workload management must be proactively addressed through clear policies and supportive structures.

By emphasizing development opportunities and mitigating challenges, startups can create environments that satisfy employees and enhance their long-term commitment. To effectively integrate dynamic roles into recruitment and retention strategies, startups should consider the following:

- Highlight role flexibility and growth potential in employer branding by using language that emphasizes opportunities for personal and professional development, along with exposure to strategic challenges.
- During the hiring process, explain how role fluidity fosters skill development and career progression, making the startup attractive to high-potential talent.
- Establish clear role expectations while maintaining flexibility, using job descriptions that outline core responsibilities alongside areas for adaptation.
- Provide structured mentorship and training programs to help employees navigate role fluidity confidently and avoid feeling overwhelmed.
- Establish transparent performance frameworks and recognition systems to align individual goals with organizational objectives, provide regular feedback, and reward dynamic contributions, fostering employee engagement and career progression.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that flexible work arrangements and dynamic roles are not merely optional benefits but strategic imperatives for early-stage startups seeking to attract and retain a motivated and resilient workforce. By aligning workplace practices with employee expectations for autonomy, growth, and balance, startups can position themselves as adaptive and employee-focused organizations. Successfully implementing these strategies can enhance recruitment, boost retention, and drive long-term organizational success. Future research should explore implementation strategies across different industries and company growth stages to provide a deeper understanding of how startups can address employee needs while driving innovation and sustainability.

## **7. Limitations**

This study provides valuable insights into recruitment and retention strategies in early-stage startups, yet certain limitations must be acknowledged. The primary aim of this thesis is to explore the appeal of adjustable work designs, such as flexible work arrangements and dynamic roles, as effective strategies for attracting and retaining talent in early-stage startups. While these strategies demonstrate significant potential, their successful implementation presents notable challenges. Future research should prioritize identifying practical, real-world solutions to address these challenges to develop actionable strategies. Besides, several methodological limitations also warrant consideration. The reliance on self-reported data, while integral to understanding personal experiences, may introduce response bias as participants may portray their perspectives or contributions more favourably. Furthermore, the relatively small sample size for the qualitative component, although sufficient for capturing in-depth insights, may constrain the generalizability of the findings to a wider population of startups or industries. Additionally, the specific focus on early-stage startups means that the findings may not fully translate to startups in later growth stages or established firms, where operational dynamics and employee motivations could differ. Despite these limitations, the study maintains its credibility and reliability due to the application of rigorous methodologies and adherence to ethical standards throughout the research process. Future studies could enhance the robustness and applicability of these findings by incorporating larger sample sizes, adopting longitudinal designs, or examining additional sectors to provide a more comprehensive understanding of talent management strategies in diverse contexts.

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## **Appendices**

### **A.1 Survey Questionnaire**

### **A.2 Survey Results**

### **A.3 Comparison of Current Availability and Employee Preference for Flexible Work**

#### **Arrangements and Dynamic Roles**

### **A.4 Chart Visualisations**

## **A.1 Survey Questionnaire**

### **The Impact of Flexible Work Arrangements, Dynamic Roles with Development Opportunities in Early-Stage Startups**

*We are Charlotte and Lisa, Master's in Management students at Nova School of Business and Economics in Lisbon. This survey is conducted as part of our Master's thesis on the topic: "The Impact of Flexible Work Arrangements, Dynamic Roles with Development Opportunities on the Recruitment and Retention Process of Early-Stage Startups".*

*This survey is intended for individuals who are currently work in, have previously been employed in, or have an interest in early-stage startups.*

*Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. All responses will remain strictly confidential and are used solely for the purpose of academic research.*

*It is estimated to take approximately 5-8 minutes to complete.*

*Thank you for participating in this survey!*

#### **Section 1: Your Experience in Startups**

##### **Definition of Early-Stage Startups:**

*An early-stage startup is defined as a company in its first three to five years, with fewer than 50 employees, focused on validating its business model.*

##### **1. What is your current employment status?**

- Employed at an early-stage startup (fewer than 50 employees)
- Previously worked at an early-stage startup
- Currently seeking employment in the early-stage startup sector

##### **2. How many years of work experience do you have in startups?**

- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7+ years
- None

#### **Section 2: Experience with Flexible Work Arrangements in Startups**

*This section explores how flexible work arrangements, in terms of work hours and location, impact your experiences, satisfaction, and decisions within startup environments.*

##### **3. Which types of flexibility are available at your startup? (Select all that apply)**

- Fully Remote work
- Adjustable work hours
- Hybrid work model (partial remote)
- Compressed workweek (e.g., four-day weeks)

- Part-time options
  - None
  - I do not have any prior experience working in a startup.
4. **Which types of flexibility would you wish to be available when working for a startup? (Select all that apply)**
- Fully Remote work
  - Adjustable work hours
  - Hybrid work model (partial remote)
  - Compressed workweek (e.g., four-day weeks)
  - Part-time options
  - On-site Work
5. **To what extent does temporal flexibility (e.g., adjustable work hours or compressed workweeks) influence your decision to apply for a role in a startup? (*Not at all significant = 1; Extremely significant = 5*)**
- 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
6. **To what extent does locational flexibility (e.g., remote work options) influence your decision to apply for a role in a startup? (*Not at all significant = 1; Extremely significant = 5*)**
- 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
7. **How important is temporal flexibility (e.g., adjustable work hours or compressed workweeks) to your long-term commitment to a startup? (*Not important at all = 1; Very Important = 5*)**
- 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
8. **How important is locational flexibility (e.g., remote work options) to your long-term commitment to a startup? (*Not important at all = 1; Very Important = 5*)**
- 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5

**9. What motivates you most about flexible work arrangements in a startup?  
(Select all that apply)**

- Improved work-life balance
- Enhanced job satisfaction
- Higher productivity
- Better mental health
- Greater control over work tasks
- Not applicable
- Other... (open Question)

**10. Would you consider leaving the startup if flexible work arrangements were reduced or removed?**

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Not sure
- Probably no
- Definitely no

**11. In your opinion, what challenges might arise when implementing flexible working arrangements in a startup environment? (Select all that apply)**

- Lack of clear boundaries between work and personal life
- Reduced communication with team members
- Feeling of isolation
- Difficulty in managing work hours effectively
- Lower visibility for promotions and growth
- Dependence on reliable technology
- None
- Other... (open Question)

**12. How would the existence of flexible work arrangements impact your overall job satisfaction and productivity?**

- Significantly increase both satisfaction and productivity
- Slightly increase both satisfaction and productivity
- No impact on satisfaction or productivity
- Slightly decrease both satisfaction and productivity
- Significantly decrease both satisfaction and productivity

**13. Would you be more inclined to join a startup if their job advertisement emphasized flexible work arrangements?**

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Not sure
- Probably no
- Definitely no

**14. If given a choice between higher compensation and flexible work arrangements, which would you prioritize?**

- Significantly higher compensation, with limited flexibility
- Moderate compensation, with high flexibility
- Equal importance to both compensation and flexibility
- Other... (open Question)

## **Section 2: Dynamic Roles in Startups**

*This section examines how dynamic roles (e.g., shifting roles, redefining responsibilities, more ownership) in startups influence skill development, personal & professional development, and overall job satisfaction.*

### **15. How often have you experienced dynamic roles (e.g., shifting roles, redefining responsibilities, more ownership) at your current or past startup?**

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never
- I do not have any prior experience working in a startup.

### **16. How would you prefer your role at a startup to be structured in terms of flexibility?**

- Very rigid, with clearly defined tasks
- Moderately flexible, with some variation in tasks
- Highly adaptable, with frequent shifts in tasks and responsibilities

### **17. What personal growth benefits do you believe you could gain from dynamic roles in a startup? (Select all that apply)**

- Increased Self-Confidence and Independence
- Enhanced Problem-Solving Skills
- Resilience and Adaptability
- Exposure to Innovation and Risk-Taking
- Effective Communication
- Team Collaboration
- None
- Other... (open Question)

### **18. To what extent do personal growth benefits (e.g. interpersonal skill development) influence your decision to apply for a role in a startup? (Not at all significant = 1; Extremely significant = 5)**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

### **19. How important are personal growth benefits (e.g. interpersonal skill development) to your long-term commitment to a startup? (Not important at all = 1; Very Important = 5)**

- 1
- 2

- 3
- 4
- 5

**20. What professional skill benefits do you believe you could gain from dynamic roles in a startup? (Select all that apply)**

- Expanded Knowledge across Business Functions
- Faster Career Progression (e.g. accelerated pathways to higher-level positions due to flat organizational structures)
- Leadership Development and Team Management
- Greater Job Autonomy and Responsibility
- Improved Decision-Making Abilities
- Strategic Thinking Skills
- Project management
- None
- Other... (open Question)

**21. To what extent do professional skill benefits (e.g., leadership skill development) influence your decision to apply for a role in a startup? (*Not at all significant = 1; Extremely significant = 5*)**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**22. How important are professional skill benefits (e.g., leadership skill development) to your long-term commitment to a startup? (*Not important at all = 1; Very Important = 5*)**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**23. How do dynamic roles impact your job satisfaction? (*Very negatively = 1; Very positively = 5*)**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**24. In your opinion, what challenges might arise when employing dynamic roles in a startup environment? (Select all that apply)**

- Difficulty in managing diverse responsibilities
- Lack of role clarity and defined expectations
- Increased workload due to overlapping tasks

- Difficulty in prioritizing tasks across different functions
- Reduced ability to specialize in a specific area
- Feeling overwhelmed by constant change
- None
- Other... (open Question)

**25. How would the existence of dynamic roles impact your overall job satisfaction and productivity?**

- Significantly increase both satisfaction and productivity
- Slightly increase both satisfaction and productivity
- No impact on satisfaction or productivity
- Slightly decrease both satisfaction and productivity
- Significantly decrease both satisfaction and productivity

**26. Would you be more inclined to join a startup if their job advertisement emphasized dynamic roles (e.g., shifting roles, redefining responsibilities, more ownership)?**

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Not sure
- Probably no
- Definitely no

**27. If given a choice between higher compensation and dynamic roles, which would you prioritize?**

- Significantly higher compensation, with limited flexibility in roles
- Moderate compensation, with high flexibility in roles
- Equal importance to both compensation and dynamic roles
- Other... (open Question)

**Section 3: Demographics and Background**

*This section gathers key details about your personal and professional background to contextualize your responses.*

**28. What is your age?**

- Under 25
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55+

**29. What is your Gender?**

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary/third gender
- Prefer not to say

## A.2 Survey Results

What is your current employment status?

104 responses

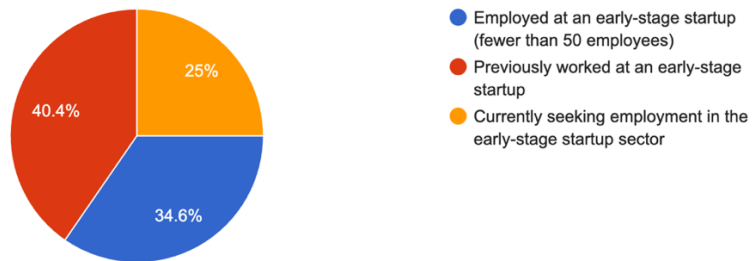


Figure 1: What is your current employment status?

How many years of work experience do you have in startups?

104 responses

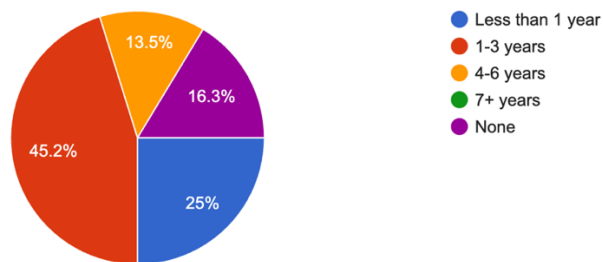


Figure 2: How many years of work experience do you have in startups?

Which types of flexibility are available at your startup? (Select all that apply)

104 Antworten

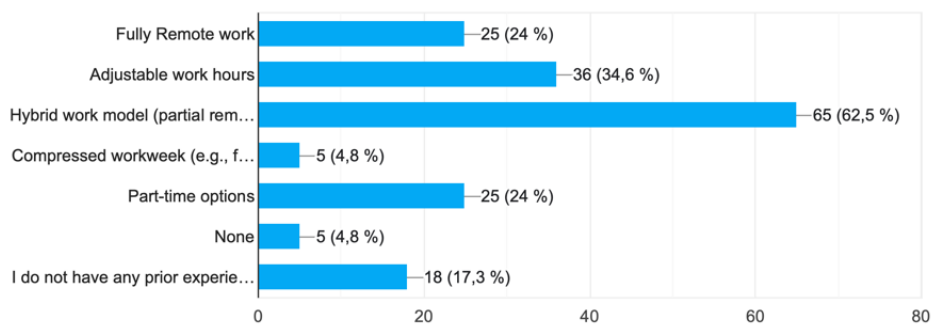


Figure 3: Which types of flexibility are available at your startup?

Which types of flexibility would you wish to be available when working for a startup? (Select all that apply)

104 Antworten

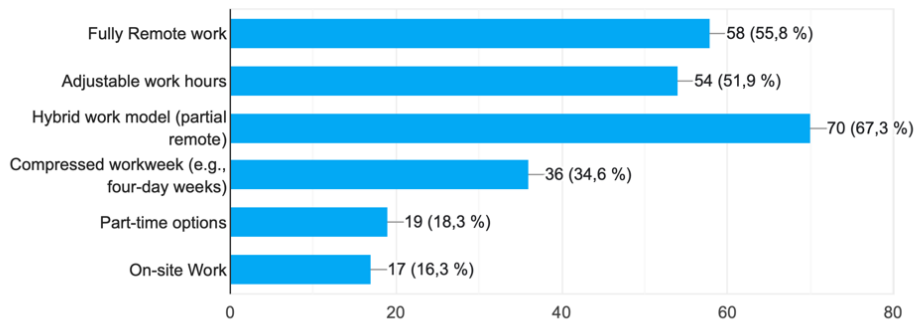


Figure 4: Which types of flexibility would you wish to be available when working for a startup?

To what extent does temporal flexibility (e.g., adjustable work hours or compressed workweeks) influence your decision to apply for a role in a startup?

104 Antworten

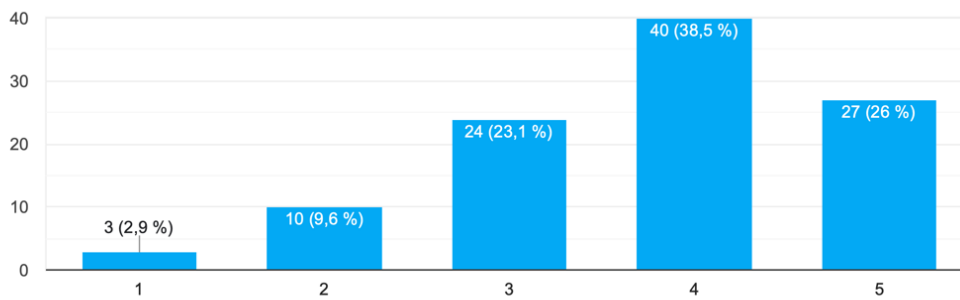


Figure 5: To what extent does temporal flexibility (e.g., adjustable work hours or compressed workweeks) influence your decision to apply for a role in a startup?

To what extent does locational flexibility (e.g., remote work options) influence your decision to apply for a role in a startup?

104 Antworten

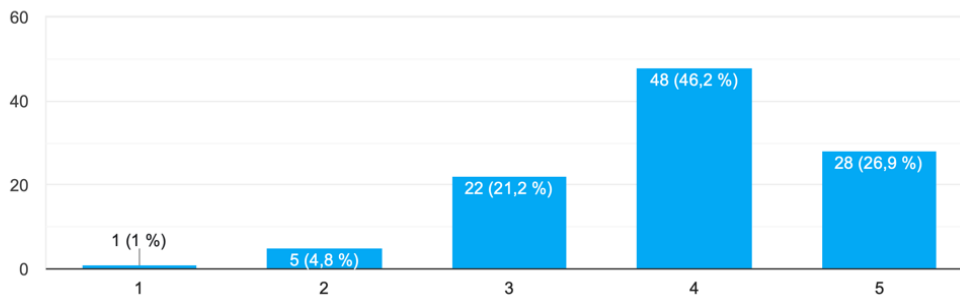


Figure 6: To what extent does locational flexibility (e.g., remote work options) influence your decision to apply for a role in a startup?

How important is temporal flexibility (e.g., adjustable work hours or compressed workweeks) to your long-term commitment to a startup?

104 Antworten

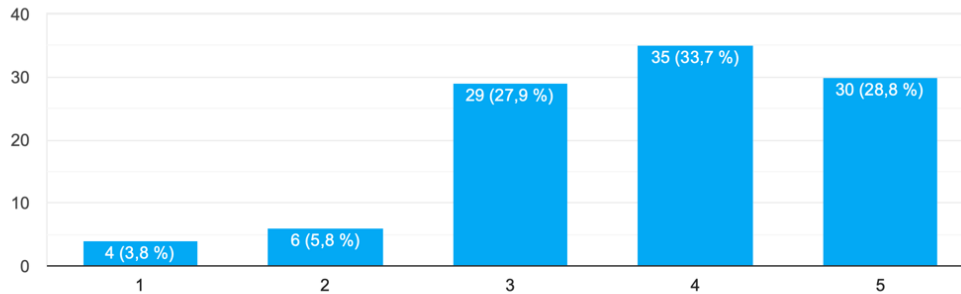


Figure 7: How important is temporal flexibility (e.g., adjustable work hours or compressed workweeks) to your long-term commitment to a startup?

How important is locational flexibility (e.g., remote work options) to your long-term commitment to a startup?

104 Antworten

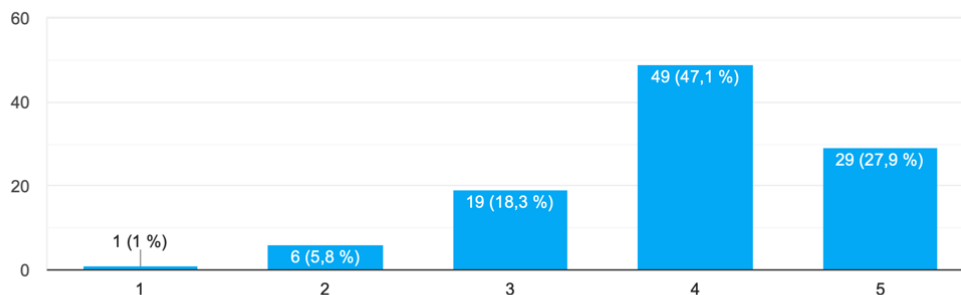


Figure 8: How important is locational flexibility (e.g., remote work options) to your long-term commitment to a startup?

What motivates you most about flexible work arrangements in a startup? (Select all that apply)

104 Antworten

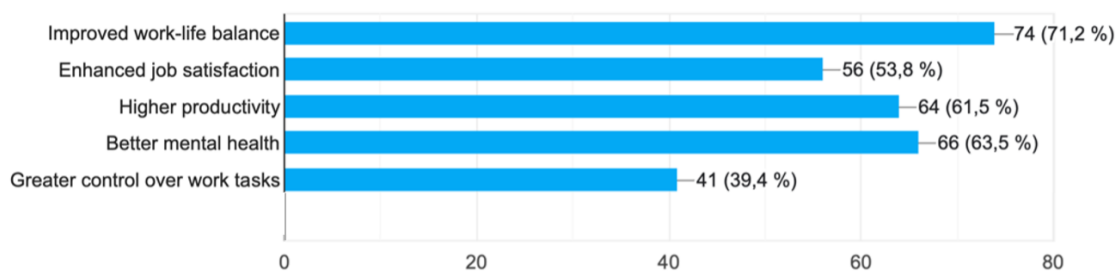


Figure 9: What motivates you most about flexible work arrangement in a startup?

Would you consider leaving the startup if flexible work arrangements were reduced or removed?  
104 Antworten

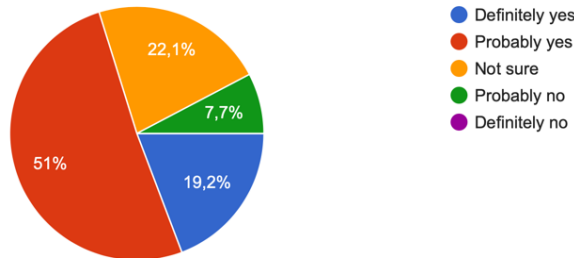


Figure 10: Would you consider leaving the startup if flexible work arrangements were reduced or removed?

In your opinion, what challenges might arise when implementing flexible working arrangements in a startup environment? (Select all that apply)  
104 Antworten

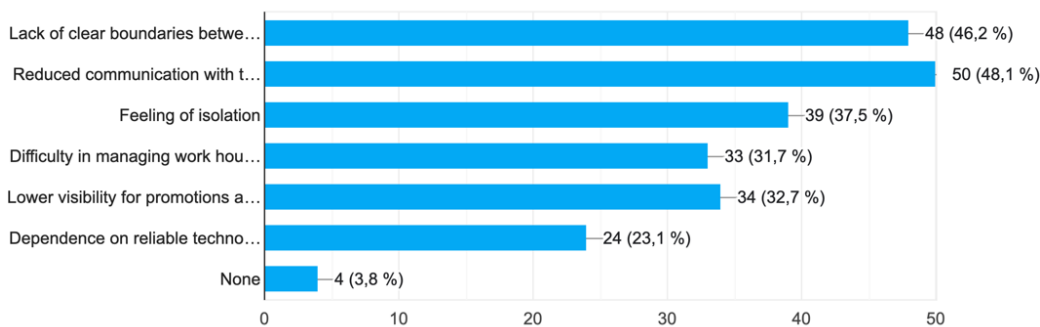


Figure 11: In your opinion, what challenges might arise when implementing flexible work arrangements in a startup environment?

How would the existence of flexible work arrangements impact your overall job satisfaction and productivity?  
104 Antworten

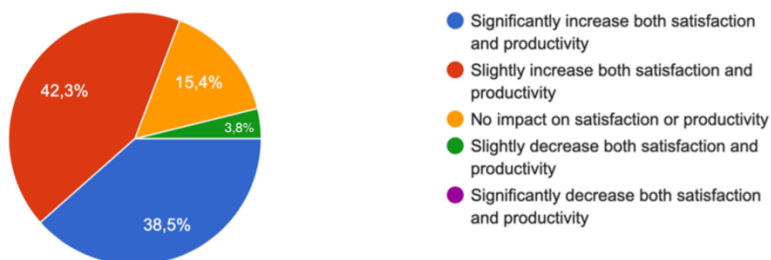


Figure 12: How would the existence of flexible work arrangements impact your overall job satisfaction and productivity?

Would you be more inclined to join a startup if their job advertisement emphasized flexible work arrangements?

104 Antworten

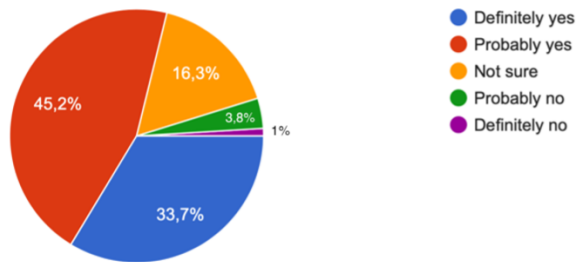


Figure 13: Would you be more inclined to join a startup if their job advertisement emphasized flexible work arrangements?

If given a choice between higher compensation and flexible work arrangements, which would you prioritize?

104 Antworten

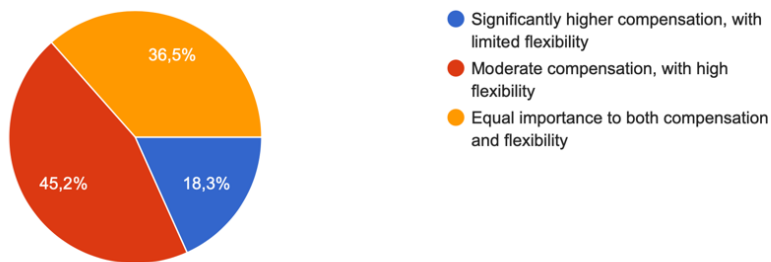


Figure 14: If given a choice between higher compensation and flexible work arrangements, which would you prioritize?

How often have you experienced dynamic roles (e.g., shifting roles, redefining responsibilities, more ownership) at your current or past startup?

104 responses

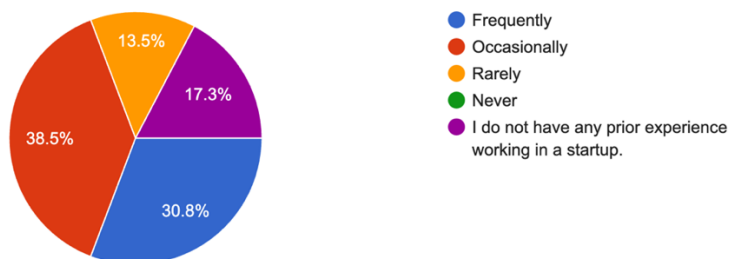


Figure 15: How often have you experienced dynamic roles (e.g., shifting roles, redefining responsibilities, more ownership) at your current or past startup?

How would you prefer your role at a startup to be structured in terms of role flexibility?

104 responses

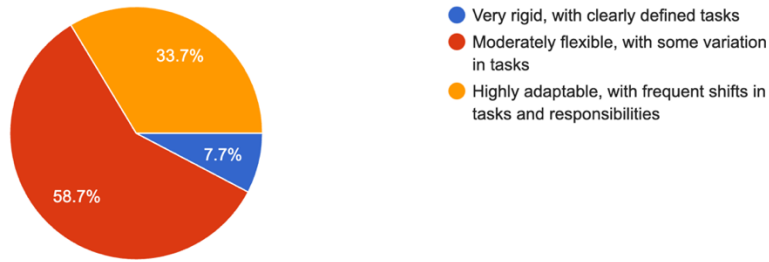


Figure 16: How would you prefer your role at a startup to be structured in terms of role flexibility?

What personal growth benefits do you believe you could gain from dynamic roles in a startup? (Select all that apply)

104 responses

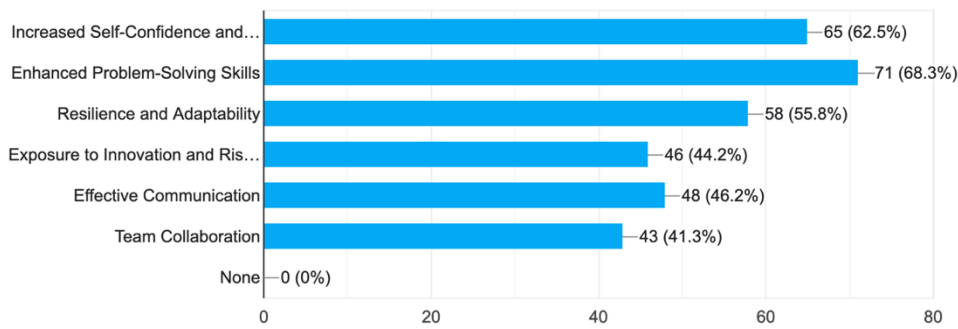
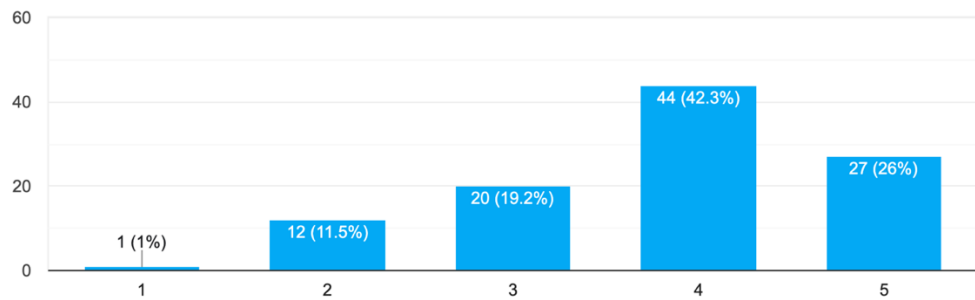


Figure 17: What personal growth benefits do you believe you could gain from dynamic roles

To what extent do personal growth benefits (e.g. interpersonal skill development) influence your decision to apply for a role in a startup?

104 responses



in a startup?

Figure 18: To what extent do personal growth benefits (e.g., interpersonal skill development) influence your decision to apply for a role in a startup?

How important are personal growth benefits (e.g. interpersonal skill development) to your long-term commitment to a startup?

104 responses

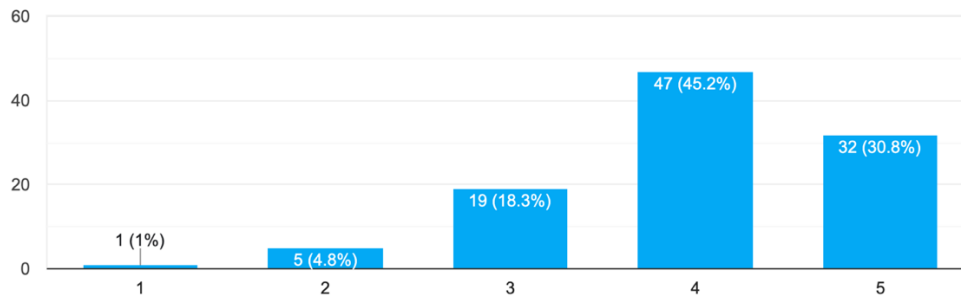


Figure 19: How important are personal growth benefits (e.g., interpersonal skill development) to your long-term commitment to a startup?

What professional skill benefits do you believe you could gain from dynamic roles in a startup? (Select all that apply)

104 responses

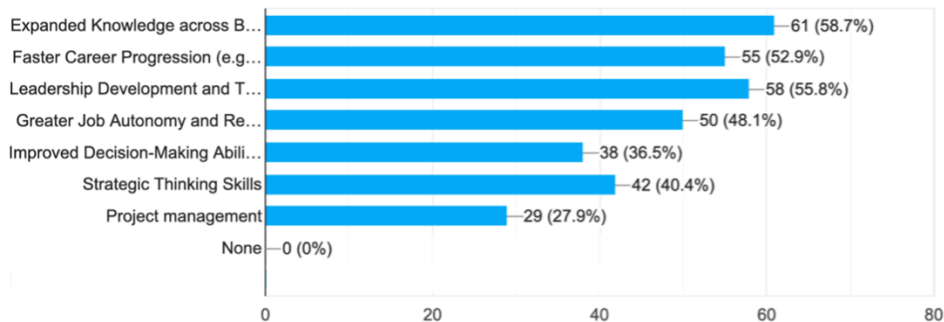


Figure 20: What professional skill benefits do you believe you could gain from dynamic roles in a startup?

To what extent do professional skill benefits (e.g. leadership skill development) influence your decision to apply for a role in a startup?

104 responses

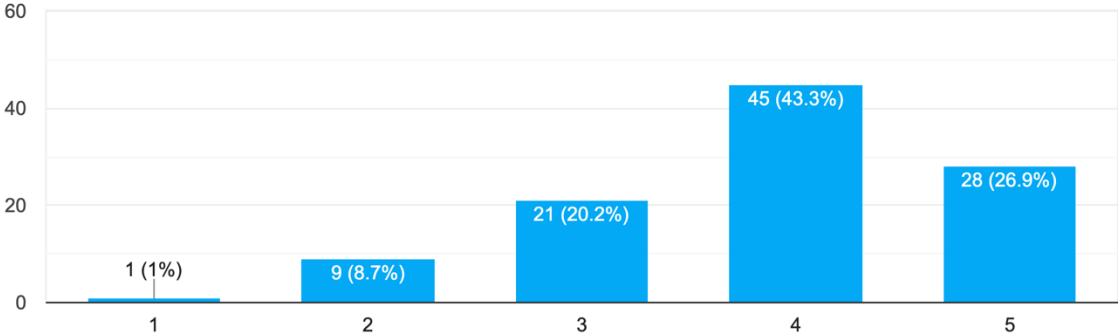


Figure 21: To what extent do professional skill benefits (e.g., leadership skill development) influence your decision to apply for a role in a startup?

How important are professional skill benefits (e.g. leadership skill development) to your long-term commitment to a startup?

104 responses

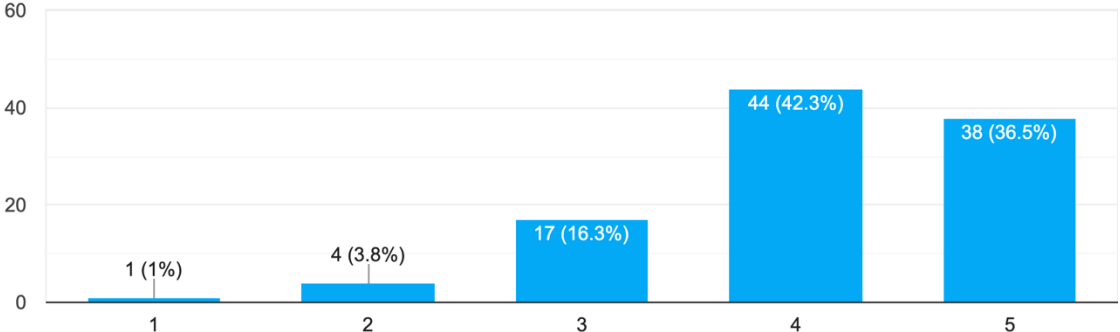


Figure 22: How important are professional skill benefits (e.g., leadership skill development) to your long-term commitment to a startup?

How do dynamic roles impact your job satisfaction?

104 responses

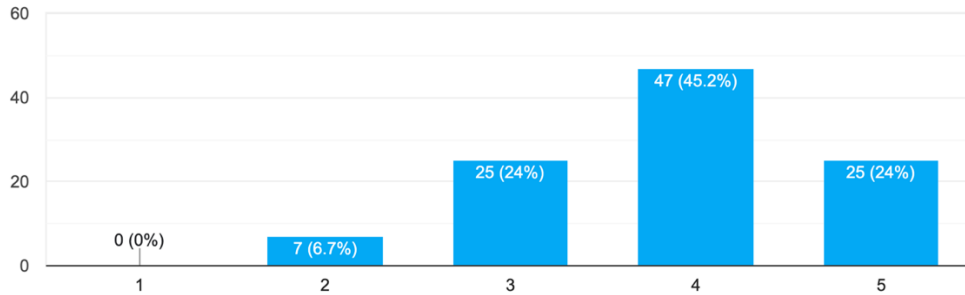


Figure 23: How do dynamic roles impact your job satisfaction?

In your opinion, what challenges might arise when employing dynamic roles in a startup environment? (Select all that apply)

104 responses

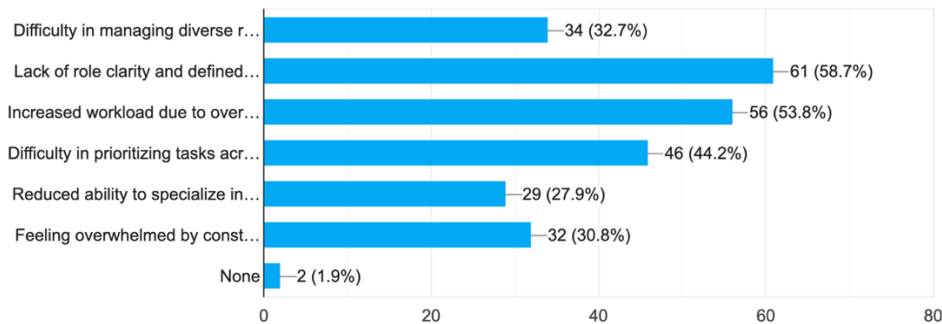


Figure 24: In your opinion, what challenges might arise when employing dynamic roles in a startup environment?

How would the existence of dynamic roles impact your overall job satisfaction and productivity?

104 responses

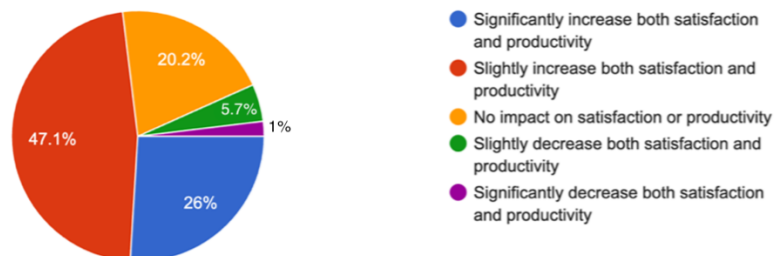


Figure 25: How would the existence of dynamic roles impact your overall job satisfaction and productivity?

Would you be more inclined to join a startup if their job advertisement emphasized dynamic roles (e.g., shifting roles, redefining responsibilities, more ownership)?  
104 responses

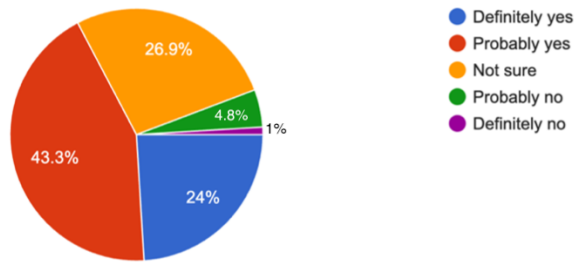


Figure 26: Would you be more inclined to join a startup if their job advertisement emphasized dynamic roles (e.g. shifting roles, redefining responsibilities, more ownership)?

If given a choice between higher compensation and dynamic roles, which would you prioritize?  
104 responses

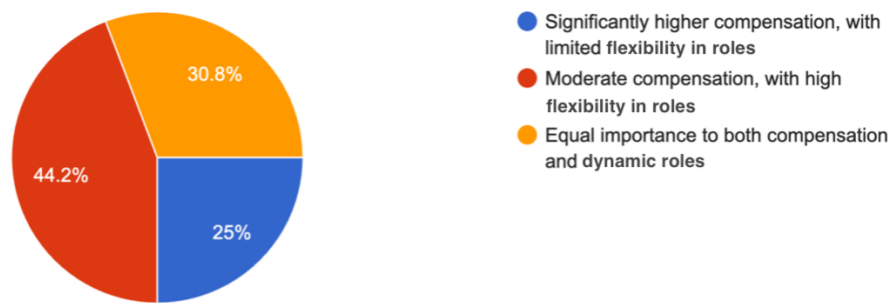


Figure 27: If given a choice between higher compensation and dynamic roles, which would you prioritize?

What is your age?  
104 responses

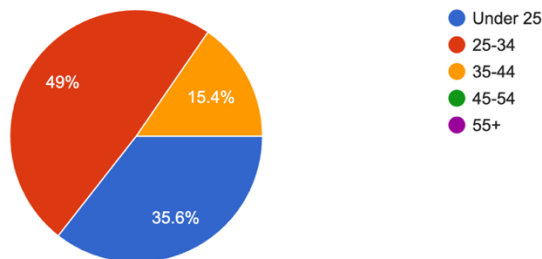


Figure 28: What is your age?

What is your Gender?

104 responses

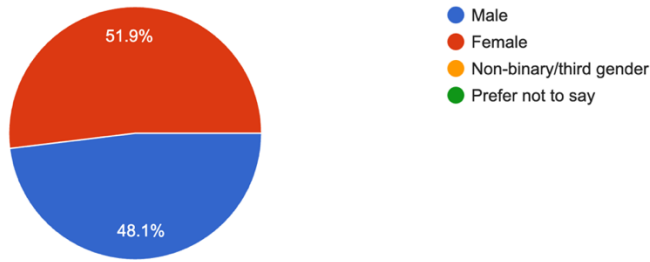


Figure 29: What is your Gender?

### A.3 Comparison of Current Availability and Employee Preference for Flexible Work Arrangements and Dynamic Roles

Comparison of Current Availability and Employee Preferences for Flexible Work Arrangements

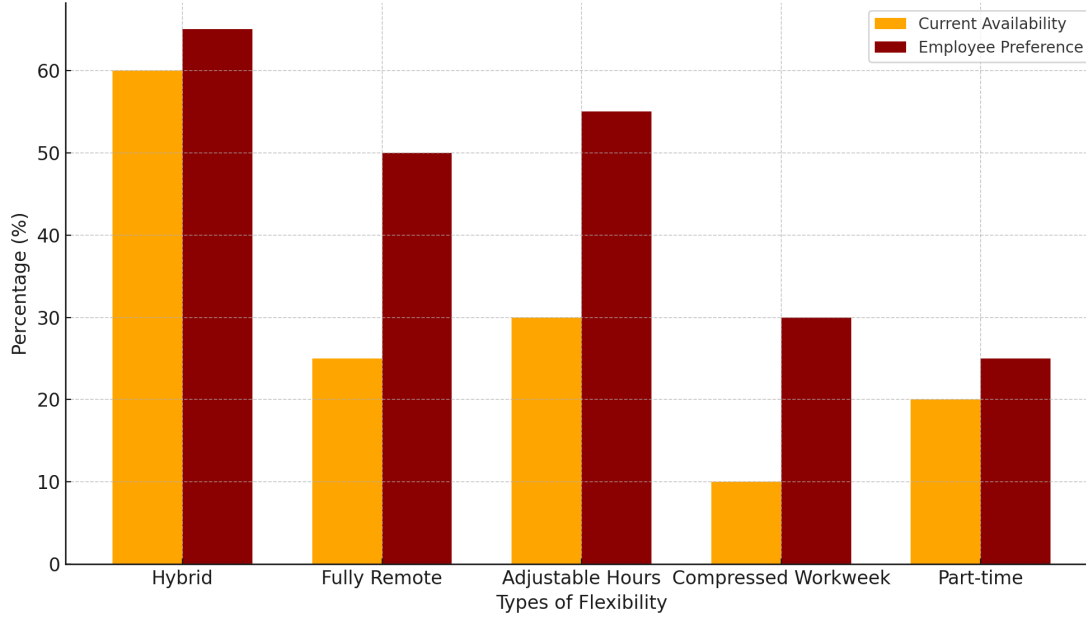


Figure 30: Comparison of Current Availability and Employee Preference for Flexible Work Arrangements (Figure 3 & 4)

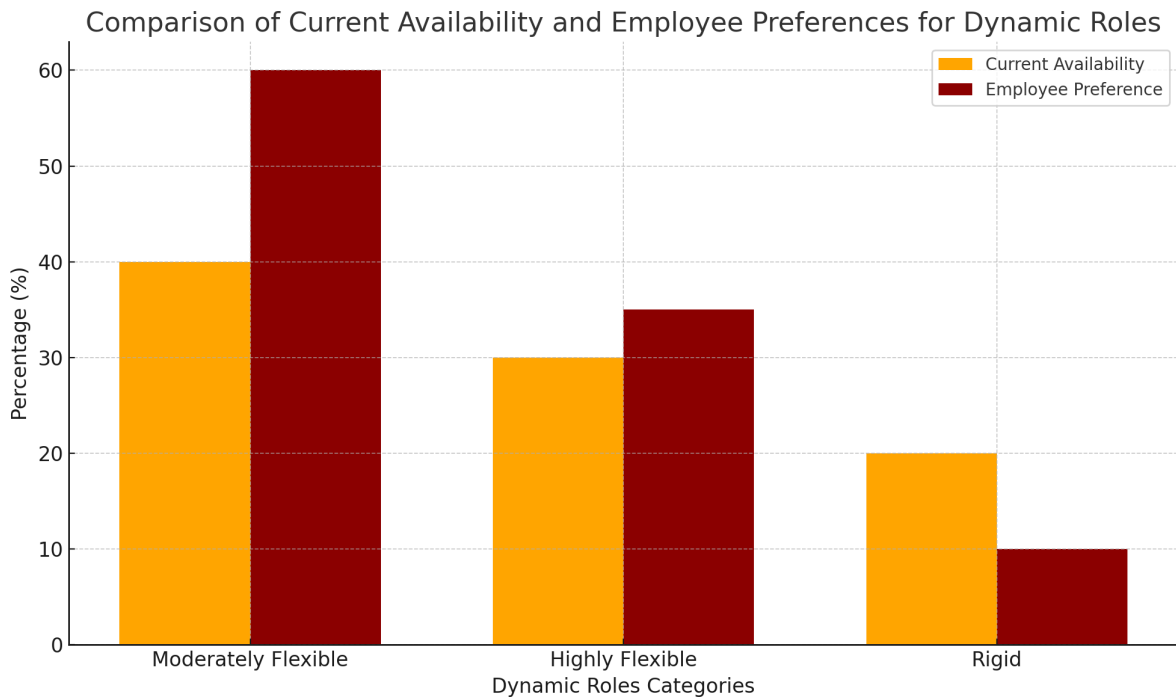


Figure 31: Comparison of Current Availability and Employee Preference for Dynamic Roles (Figure 15 & 16)

#### A.4 Chart Visualisations

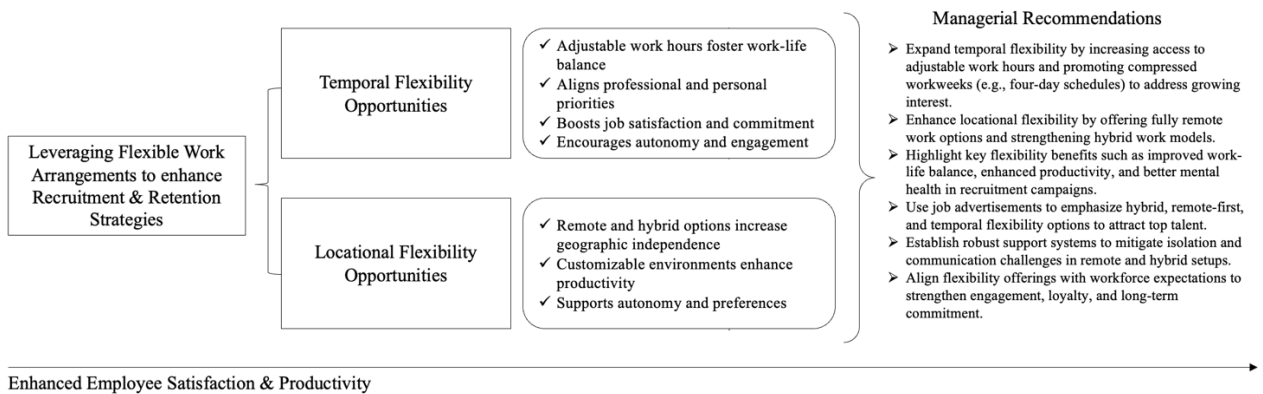
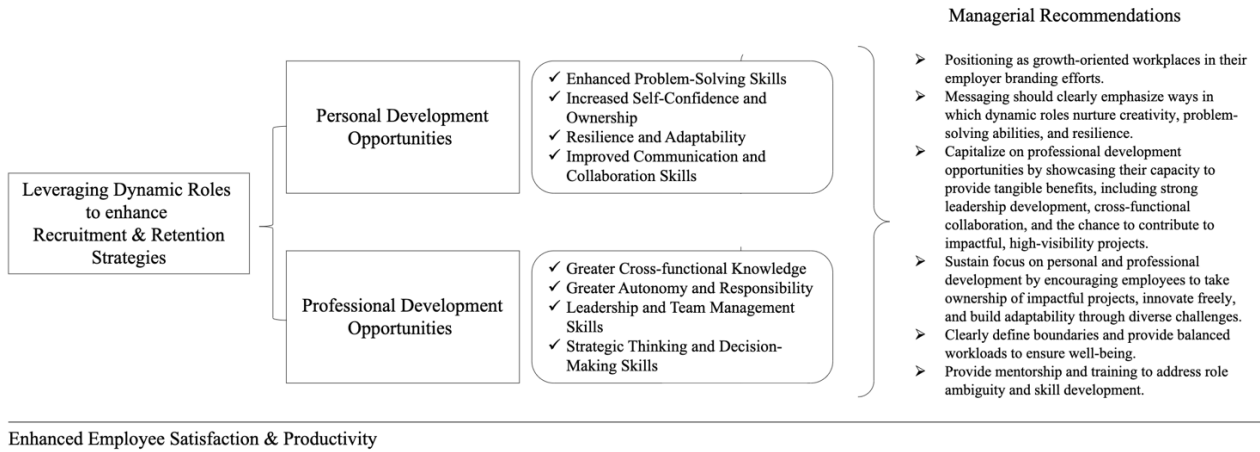


Figure 32: Leveraging Temporal and Locational Flexibility to Enhance Recruitment and Retention Strategies



*Figure 33: Leveraging Dynamic Roles with Development Opportunities to Enhance Recruitment and Retention Strategies*



*Figure 34: Framework for Enhanced Recruitment and Retention Strategies in Early-Stage Startups*