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Can the same smartworking adoption lead to different perceptions across different units? The case of Regione Calabria

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1. INTRODUCTION

In an age of great instability and changes, companies and public organizations are pursuing innovations to solve unprecedented challenges. To face this uncertainty, organizations are changing their processes to become more flexible and responsive by introducing new tools to manage internal resources, including Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs).

FWAs are employment practices that allow workers flexibility in how they perform their tasks, mostly in flexible working hours and flexible workplace [Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013].

Although this phenomenon peaked during the Covid-19 pandemic, when almost all organizations in the world asked their employees to start working from home or "smart working" (SW) [Brynjolfsson et al., 2020; Gottlieb et al., 2020], the FWAs was topic of great interest for academic and practitioners even before the health crisis. From the first attempt of exploring the impact of FWAs on the organizations in the early 1970s [De Menezes & Kelliher, 2011], there has been a noticeable diffusion of innovative working methods and, more in general, of new organizational principles through which work practices were accomplished. Some organizations have allowed their employees to perform work activities remotely choosing between different types, including telework, home-based telework, mobile work, virtual teams and, more recently, smart working, let them generally free to determine where and when carry out the assigned activities.

The interest in FWAs stems from early research findings, according to which flexibility is often a strategic factor to firms' competitive success due to its direct effect on productivity, profitability, and global firm performance. Furthermore, flexibility also produces an indirect effect, due to its positive correlation with employee engagement and commitment [Bal & De Lange, 2014; Zeijen, Peeters, & Hakanen, 2018] because more satisfied workers exhibit higher job performance [Origo & Pagani 2008]. Moreover, since flexibility help employees to enhance work-life balance, these methods make workforce more productive and motivated [Berman, Bowman, West & Van Wart 2016; Kwon & Jeon 2018; Overmyer 2011; Wadsworth, Facer & Arbon 2010]. However, research on the impact of flexible working arrangements reports mixed results. These methods may have unintended effects, such as an increase in work–life conflict, potential career penalties, less management support, not recognized and appreciated commitment, less commitment due to less control [Hammer et al., 2005; Leslie et al., 2012], or can raise new administrative barriers, such as work scheduling, coordination, and performance evaluation issues, but also equity problems, as flexible working methods may not be available to all employees [Scandura & Lankau, 1997; Lawrence & Corwin, 2003; Charron & Lowe, 2005]. Moreover, some study [e.g., Chen & Fulment, 2017; Curzi et al., 2020] noted that there was no significant difference in organizational commitment levels between employees that use smart working and those who simply have the option of FWAs but no use them.

Beyond the potential benefits of the flexible working practices, organizations and managers have often rejected these methods until the pandemic because they are unprepared and fearful of the big change.

From an organizational point of view, several research studied the impact of FWAs on financial measures such as profitability, productivity, return on assets and return on investment [Baltes et al., 1999; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; Stavrou, 2005]. Although some studies highlight a positive correlation, most of them report mixed findings or no direct association with FWAs. In a review on this theme, de Menezes and Kelliher (2011) found that remote working may positively influence job performance, but any association differs from the type of flexible work, employees and managers perceptions, and organizational characteristics.

Managers are more burdened by this type of arrangement, especially regarding communication, supervision, and overall management of employees [Towers-Perrin, 2001] because, as performance and reporting times differ for each employee, they must organize a different organizational structure for each of them [Sweet et al., 2014]. Furthermore, working from home does not allow to constantly evaluate the workers, effectively eliminating face-to-face supervision. Consequently, managers and organizational leaders may discourage flexible working methods implicitly or explicitly due to their reluctance to relinquish control [Dancaster, 2006]. Organizations and managers may be conservative towards flexible working practices also because these methods require a lot of training and preparation to create the ideal conditions for their implementation and to identify suitable workers and jobs [Bentley et al., 2013].

Even when organizations offer these methods, a considerable number of employees often elect not to use these methods, despite the widespread availability of FWAs and their potential benefits [Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006; Caillier, 2013; Kwon & Jeon 2018]. Noting this discrepancy, many research has focused on which organizational factors, such as inconsistent supervisors support, organizational culture, and reward systems [e.g., Allen, 2001; Galinsky, Bond, & Hill, 2004; Thomas & Ganster, 1995], and which individual factors, such as gender, age, family responsibility and education [e.g., Billings & Sharpe, 1999; Sharpe, Hermsen, & Billings, 2002], enable or prevent the adoption of flexible working policies. In addition, subsequent research has focused more on the deeper human motivations of participation in or not of FWAs, focusing mainly on life management motives, motivations and desires, relational factors, and work-related factors [Kristen et al., 2012; Kwon et al., 2019].

Today, the global pandemic has brough FWAs and smart working at the center of the debate due to the extent of the phenomenon. In Italy, for example, according to "Observatory on Smart Working", the number tripled during the pandemic compared to the previous year, reaching more than one million people in just a few weeks. The mandatory lockdown prescribed by governments has forced organizations not only to adopt smartworking for their workforce, but also to re-examine the post-lockdown organization of work as the behavior becomes entrenched [Tanwar & Punit, 2020]. SW has the potential to go beyond traditional working arrangements,

offering work conditions grounded on a greater discretion and flexibility in work activities and on a larger responsibility towards results [Haines, St-Onge, 2012; Wood et al., 2012].

It is difficult to predict the future but if smart working will remain a usual way of working even after the pandemic, further research needs to be conducted on people's reactions and perceptions considering the great impact on both employees and employers working and lifestyle.

1.1   Problem Discussion

While FWAs has been researched for decades, it has been investigated from a voluntary adoption perspective. The literature has focused attention on the perceived availability and accessibility of these practices [Budd and Mumford, 2006] when organizations proposed them to be more flexible and competitive, leaving employees the choice to join or not according to their preferences.

Due to the Covid pandemic, however, FWAs were not introduced for a well-defined strategic plan, but organizations and employees were forced to use them for the health emergency, beyond their will and without any preparation. In this situation, many organizations have introduced the same flexible working methods, and in particular smart working, within the entire organization or in a large part of it without adapting them to the peculiarities of each business units.

As a result, we have few research and information on employee perception and satisfaction when flexible work arrangements are mandatory and, more importantly, on what factors affect them when same methods are introduced within different units of the same organization [Tripi & Mattei, 2020; Ferodova et al., 2020; Bolisani et al., 2020].

1.2   Purpose & Research Question

Since the previous literature has focused on the voluntary adoption to FWAs, defined on the specific characteristics of the context in which they were introduced, the objective of this research is to contribute to the knowledge regarding flexible working methods adopted suddenly and uniformly in the whole organization, without preparation and adaptation to the specific needs.

In particular, the main goal is to verify if the same smartworking adoption can lead to different perceptions and satisfaction across different units of the same organization. Furthermore, the aim is to clarify whether these perceptions differ according to the position held, comparing managers and employees' opinion.

Knowledge regarding the perception on smart working can help to identify what opportunities it offers for the future and how to exploit them because, having been used for a long period of time in most organizations worldwide, it could become an entrenched working modality.

Using semi-structured interviews with managers and employees of three different organizational units, these factors are analyzed in the case of the Regione Calabria. Starting from the main goal, the research question is defined as follows:

"Can the same smartworking adoption lead to different perceptions across different units? The case of Regione Calabria"

To define their perception on smart working, various information was collected during the interviews: demographic and individual characteristics, opinion on their current job, perceived advantages and disadvantages of working from home and their willingness to adopt it in the future. The information obtained was then elaborated and discussed compared with literature's indication.

1.3   Findings

As detailed in the following sections, the analysis of the results confirms some theories of the previous literature and contrasts others. It is interesting to note that managers and employees of the same organizational unit share most of the perceptions on smart working, giving the feeling that the role covered does not influence their considerations. From the comparison between the different organizational units, however, many differences are observed, although on some topics the opinions are practically the same for all the interviewees.

1.4   Research Disposition

For a better understanding of the research and the various steps followed for its definition, its structure is presented below and summarized in *Table 1*.

I.   Introduction

The first section presents the background of the main topics considered and analyzed within the research. Starting from the problem emerged from the analysis of these topics, the purpose and the main research question were identified. The most interesting results of the research are also briefly presented.

II.   Literature Review

This section contains the topics analyzed in the previous research. Starting from the generic definition of flexible working arrangements, smart working is defined both from a regulatory and literary point of view, considering it in relation to the Public Administration and the Covid-19 pandemic. After defining the context of the research, information is collected on the smart working outcomes and the factors that influence them.

III.   Methodology

Methodology refers to the research strategy. This section contains the research strategy, including the aim of the research, method used to conduct it, main topics, research population, and the structure of the interview. Moreover, it also presents what types of data were collected and how they were analyzed, as well as the tools used to ensure the validity of the research.

IV.   Empirical Findings

This section shows the interviews carried out with the selected population, dividing all the information collected for each organizational unit considered.

V.   Analysis of Findings

The information contained in the previous section are analyzed by making a comparison with the previous theory. Furthermore, for the aim of the research, a comparison is also made between the perceptions of managers and employees and between the different organizational units.

VI.   Conclusions

The final section discusses the most interesting findings of the research. In addition, the limitations of research and implications for future research are indicated.

Table 1 – Research disposition

1. INTRODUCTION	2. LITERATURE REVIEW	3. METHODOLOGY	4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS	5. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS	6. CONCLUSIONS

• Background
 	
• Problem discussion
 	
• Purpose and Research question
 	
• Findings
	• Flexible working arrangements
	
	• Smart working
	
	• Outcomes
	
	• Enablers
		• Research design
		
		• Research method
		
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		• Research validity
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			  o *Manager A*
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			  o *Manager B*
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					• Conclusions
					
					• Implications
					
					• Future research
					
					• Limitations

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Smart working has become one of the tools that companies and public organizations can use to radically innovate the traditional work organization, while trying to improve the organizational performance and, at the same time, the well-being of employees. It is a way of executing the employment relationship without precise time or place constraints using technological tools, but it differs from teleworking which, instead, always involves a formalization of the movement. Teleworkers move, in whole or in part, from the traditional workplace to another location, but they are bound to work in a fixed and pre-established place, with same time limits and workloads as who work within the traditional workplace [Marchioni et al., 2019].

In 2015 in Italy, the legislator established that flexible working methods had to be voluntarily adopted by at least 10% of public employees within three years. In 2019, despite its adoption tripling compared to the previous year, smart working was still insufficiently widespread due to the association with the "Teleworking" and, consequently, with its issues and limitations. In fact, according to an Italian Court of Auditors report, not many administrations structurally used teleworking, although it has been practicable for about twenty years. This is due to several causes, including the inadequacy of technological equipment, lack of skilled workers, scarce financial resources, and various legal-administrative issues.

The Coronavirus emergency (COVID-19), and the need to find a balance between the provision of essential services and contagion containment measures, however, has accelerated and generalized the use of smart working, reaching in Italy more than one million people in just few weeks after the onset of the pandemic [Gaglione et al., 2020]. Figure 1 shows the percentage of public employees in smart working in the Italian regions in April 2020.

Figure 1 – Public employees in Smart Working in April 2020 (Tripi & Mattei, 2020 – Data: Department of Public Administration)

2.1 Flexible Working Arrangements

Flexibility is defined as the opportunity organizations provide to their employees to choose where and when to work [Allen et al., 2013]. There are two types of flexibility within organizations: irregular flexibility, that allows employees to cope with an irregular amount of work over a given period [Casper & Harris, 2008], and regular flexibility, which refers to daily flexibility that allow employees to choose their work schedules and job-sharing arrangements [Bal & De Lange, 2014].

On forms of flexible work arrangements, the most common types have been categorized as follows:

- Flexibility of the "place" is a form in which employees work from a location outside of their organizational setting. This consist of telework or flexplace, defined as a flexible work method that allows employees to work in different locations, typically using communication and information technologies [Pérez et al., 2002].

  Although there are many forms of telework or flexplace, these four types include most of them: telecommuting, satellite offices, neighborhood work centers, and mobile workers [Kurland & Bailey, 1999]. Teleworkers perform their duties outside the workplace, but choose to work from a permanent place, usually from home. Employees at satellite and neighborhood work offices work outside home or organization, but they differ because employees at satellite offices are from a single organization, while employees at neighborhood work centers can be from multiple organizations that share office spaces. Such opportunities allow employees to engage in regular interactions with work colleagues, while reducing the commuting time and the need to purchase office space.

- Flexibility in the "number of days" is often associated with the compressed workweek. In a compressed workweek, employees may work more hours for some days and gain extra days to spend in no-work activities. This method allows employers to realize substantial cost savings, as well as higher employee performance and satisfaction [Baltes et al., 1999]. In addition, environmentally conscious organizations reduce pollution and contamination.

- Flexibility in the number of "hours" typically refers to any reduction of workload or in the amount of working time in exchange for lower pay [Kossek & Michel, 2011].

  It includes part time jobs, under which employees are required to work less hours, and job sharing, under which more employees voluntarily share work responsibilities [Christensen & Staines, 1990].

- For flexibility in "time", the most common method used is flextime.

  Using flextime, employees can choose, within organizational parameters, to vary the start and end time of their working day according to their personal needs [Avery & Zabel, 2001]. Flextime schedules have

a predetermined range of times in which employees can arrive and leave, with a core band in which all employees must be present. This core hours help managers with the coordination and supervision [Van Dyne, Kossek & Lobel, 2007].

This method is most applicable to professional and higher-level employees than to lower-level employees or workers in service and manufacturing industries [Kossek and Distelberg, 2009].

- The last form of flexibility, and the less available, allows short-term breaks or time off in employment. This includes part-year work, sabbaticals, vacations, and leaves. These flexible work arrangements allow employees to take paid time away from work without losing it [Etzion, 2003], helping them to engage in renewal, undergo new skill development, travel, or attend to care giving.

Organizations perceive FWAs as a tool for obtaining and retaining high quality workers [Cole, 2006], while increasing the overall satisfaction and engagement [Nadeem & Henry, 2003]. Moreover, organizations are increasingly adopting these methods to cope with labor market shift, technological forces, and more focus on working life balance [Omondo & Obonyo, 2018].

For the intended of this research, in some cases, flexible working arrangements and smart working are used as synonyms, since the latter represents its most innovative and complete form.

2.2   Smart Working

The most recently and, surely, the more advanced flexible working method is Smart working.
According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, Smart working is defined as an approach to organize work to obtain greater efficiency and effectiveness in achieving job outcomes, through an optimization of tools and working environments, and a combination of flexibility, collaboration, and autonomy.

It can be regarded as an evolution of teleworking, but its ideation puts more emphasis on the potentially positive effects for both companies and people. Smart working allows to rich the higher level of productivity [Fragouli & Ilia, 201] and to improve creativity and innovation [Kang & Kwong, 2016] thanks to better working conditions [Kim & Oh, 2015] and greater spatial and temporal flexibility [Fogarty et al., 2011]. Moreover, this concept refers to an advanced forms of work organization in which the "smart worker" operates during complex processes, interacting remotely, cooperatively, and collaboratively with colleagues, and being evaluated based on achievement results [Mattalucci, 2014].

The potential impacts of smart working and the factors that can influence its success have been widely considered in the literature. Hassan (2016) identified several key factors that influence smart working outcomes, such as the nature of the job, clear policies and goal, adaptation to employee's need. Similarly, Kang and Kwon (2016) analyzed the possible determinants of the adoption, singled out factors at individual level, such as the capability of self-control, and at firm level, such as innovation, personnel evaluation, information system adopted.

In addition to these factors, the differences in acceptance and perception between employees have also been considered. For example, van der Lippe and Lippényi (2020) pointed out that it is more difficult to work in team when too many employees are working remotely, and the job position [Park, 2018] or leadership style [Park & Kim, 2013] can amplify this problem.

Smart working can have an impact on socialization processes and individual work styles [Mallia & Ferris, 2000; Troup & Rose, 2012], changing the forms of interaction between colleagues, which in turn can modify the sharing and management knowledge processes.

Although the "smart" definition could suggest only positive effects to both companies and employees, it is important to consider that smart working can also lead to additional problems in work management and in the employees' private life. Some studies, for example, highlight the positive effects of working conditions [Govindaraju & Sward, 2005], while other underline its difficult implementation and its several negative impacts [Richardson et al., 2006]. Possible obstacles to successful implement smart working can include not only the required investments in information technologies, but also organizational aspects such difficult coordination and cooperation, management's fear of losing control, and concerns about working isolation [Sarti & Torre, 2017].

Moreover, smart working can become a critical issue for individual life. It is commonly considered a tool to provide better tradeoff between work and private life because it provides flexibility and can help to balance them but, on the other hand, working from home is often associated with longer hours of work, leading to greater intrusion of working issues into the personal sphere [Dockery & Bawa, 2014].

2.2.1 Smart working & PA

Focusing on Italy, the context of this research, telework was introduced in public administration as a form of distance work by Decree n.70/1999, providing information on its features and the criteria to introduce and use it. About ten years later, the enactment of the decree n.221/2012 introduced the "Telelavoro by default", with which the administrations were required to implement a plan for the telework adoption in which they had to specify the modalities of realization and the activities for which it was not possible. Since public organizations have not exploited this tool to became more innovative and efficient, the Law for the Reform of the Public Administration (Madia Reform, law n.124/2015) promoted even more the use of flexible working method,

providing suggestions and stating that within three years at least 10% of public employees should have used this method.

The last step in the regulatory framework of smart working in Italy is represented by its definition, introduced by the Law n. 81/2017: smart working is a way to regulate the workers-organization relationship, also recurring to forms of organization by stages, cycles and goals, without timetable or place working constraints, to increase competitiveness and to facilitate the balance of working and living times. The purpose was, on the one hand, to improve organizations' productivity and, on the other hand, to promote a better work life balance for workers [Capobianco, 2017].

Creating few and new rules, with lightweight characteristics and obligations, this law aimed to stimulate a cultural change in the concept of work: no more based on working hours, but on goals, in which worker have freedom to self-organize job to meet the goals set at the due dates. The most innovative element of the law, however, was to configure smart working as a structured organizational tool, making it available for all employees who carry out compatible tasks.

2.2.2   Smart working & Covid-19

In late 2019, the Chinese office of the World Health Organization (WHO) was informed of the first case of pneumonia of unknown origin in the city of Wuhan (Hubei Province). After identifying the coronavirus responsible for this severe acute respiratory syndrome, the SARS Cov-2, the Covid-19 emergency began and, on March 11, 2020, the WHO declared a pandemic, as the virus was in 160 countries [Xiang et al, 2020]. To prevent and contain the spread of the infection, lockdown measures were adopted [Gaglione et al., 2020] and the use of smart working has been strengthened, identifying simplified and temporary ways of accessing with reference to the overall workers, without any distinction. The presence in the offices has been limited only to cases in which it was necessary for carrying out activities strictly related to the emergency and essential activities.

With these provisions we went much further than the original concept of smart working, which was intended only for some part of the work performance: all the activities was carried out remotely, becoming the ordinary working method. It was an even more binding provision in the public sector than to the private sector, in which many companies have preferred, as allowed by the new provisions, to temporarily suspend their work or use other flexible tools [Maresca, 2020].

At first, organizations were asked to use telematic methods for meetings, conferences and training sessions, also providing specific measures for tests insolvency and work premises. To encourage the use of these methods, indications were also provided on the methods for implementing the provisions, and on the tools which could have used to incentivize the use of flexible methods.

Subsequently, the use of smart working was further strengthened, establishing that it was automatically applied to any employment relationship, in compliance with the principles dictated by the national provision. In the meantime, with the D.L. 2 March 2020, the experimental regime initially envisaged for agile work in public administrations was exceeded, explicitly providing that it had to be considered the ordinary organizational form until the end of the emergency, to protect the health of citizens and employees and, at the same time, to balance this primary necessity with the need to provide essential services.

Even in the "Phase two", that of the slow return to normality, the regulatory framework is substantially unchanged because, although organizations can assess whether to continue to use methods implemented so far or if they must be rethought, it is still required to favor ductile, innovative and flexible solutions [Tripi & Mattei, 2020].

With these provisions, a particular situation has come about due to the extreme urgency of the measures, the obligation to implement smart working, and the great heterogeneity of the various organizations. This heterogeneity is not only related to different organizational tools, operating methods, and objectives, but also in the degree of implementation of smart working when the new provisions came into force. Some administrations, although in an experimental form, were already organizing themselves well before the Covid-19 pandemic, although mainly in an experimental form, while others have begun to activate smart working method only following the entry into force of the provisions. Consequently, forced application of this tool has brought out undeniable criticalities: while it can act as an impulse to innovate, by encouraging these practices even after the end of this emergency, it may also involve the risk, especially for those who were not yet ready, of formal adhesion without results [Pattaro & Tripi, 2013].

2.3   Flexible Working Enablers

In the last decades, there have been many predictions that FWAs adoption levels would increase significantly because of the rapid development in Information and Communication technologies (ICT), but this expected diffusion across organizations did not happen [Naskrošienė et al., 2019]. However, the Covid-19 pandemic emergency forced companies and institutions to reduce or, in many cases, to eliminate the number of in-office workers.

Following the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), according to which past behavior and habits can influence future intentions and attitudes, smart working could be adopted at a higher rate than in the past due to mandatory and extensive use during the health crisis [Palmi et al., 2020]. For this reason, it is necessary to consider what are the factors that influence the perception on smart working and induce or hinder the intention to adopt it.

2.3.1 Individual Characteristics

The individual characteristics determine the need for and the use of flexible work schedules among the employees. The employee demographic characteristics linked to flexible work schedules include gender, family structure, and age.

According to previous research, women have increased their participation in the labor market without a proportional decrease in their housework involvement (ILO, 2004). So, since women tend to prioritize family care [Kawaguchi, 2007] and to concern more about work-family conflict, they may be more likely to use flexible work practices. However, as men today increasingly appreciate the need for a more balanced life to take on their domestic responsibilities, is more appropriate to shift the focus from gender to family structure, which generally refers to civil status, the couple labor situation and the presence or absence of children [Goni-Legaz & Ollo López, 2014]. People with children or within dual earner couples have more family responsibilities than people without children or in couples where women are responsible for the household [Knudsen & Waerness, 2009]. Therefore, these employees are more likely to use and appreciate FWAs [Pichler, 2009] due to the higher work-family conflict.

In terms of age, older people tend to use flexible working arrangements less because, being more likely to have a traditional relationship [Inglehart & Norris, 2003], in which man is engaged in paid work and woman is responsible for the housework, they do not need to face the work-family conflict [Hill et al., 2012].
Young people also have a more balanced approach to work than previous generations [Deal, 2007] and favor greater flexibility in carrying out their tasks [Lyons & Kuron, 2014]. Moreover, Sweet, Pitt-Catsouphes and Boone (2016) discovered that older managers are less likely to implement FWAs than younger managers, often being closed towards innovation.

2.3.2 Job Characteristics

Smart working adoption often depends on the type of job and work activities involved. Management or administrative workers, whose activities require manipulation, interpretation, or communication of data, are more suited for smart working. Conversely, for product-oriented works, where employees must be physically present on a given working shift, or for service-oriented work, in which is necessary to meet customers regularly, FWAs are not a practical option for the organizations [Christensen & Staines, 1990]. Moreover, if job requires close collaboration with external institutions, employees may not be able to participate in FWA because they need to be physically in the office for better coordination and execution.

Therefore, management must correctly identify and select suitable jobs and workers for flexible working arrangements and create the conditions under which these tools are supported and implemented [Turetken et al., 2011; Beauregard et al., 2019; Bentley et al., 2013].

2.3.3 Organization

For an effective introduction and implementation of flexible working methods, the organizational must support and enhance these practices. In fact, management support, defined as the degree to which an employee believes that management is committed to the success and utilization of an innovation [Venkatesh & Bala, 2008], is an important influencer in the adoption of FWAs because if manager perceives fewer barrier and more benefits, employees are more likely to commit to adopting them [Pérez, De Luis Carnicer and Sánchez, 2002]. Moreover, when these modalities are not adequately supported by the management, the employees may have the perception that the adoption of FWAs can have a negative impact on their career prospects [Kodz et al., 2002]. For there to be management support, there must be a positive relationship between employees and managers. Mutual trust between management and employees has an impact on the levels of involvement, performance, satisfaction and, most importantly, approval of remote work [Stout et al., 2013]. Without trust, managers perceive greater difficulties in managing, controlling, and evaluating smart workers. When managers find more difficult to interact and observe smart workers than traditional workers, this is likely to result in a lack of support and, consequently, become a barrier to flexible working adoption [Vilhelmson & Thulin, 2016].

Management must provide proper guidance to effectively manage workers, clarifying responsibilities and roles, and establishing transparent and concrete performance evaluations to ensure that employees achieve organizational goals [Greenberg et al., 2004; Downes & Koekemoer, 2011]. The organization should move away from a "process-oriented" culture to a "results-oriented" culture, in which the object of the evaluation shifts from the physical presence and working hours to the obtained results.

This also improve supervision, as flexible working arrangements change the way in which employees and management coordinate and communicate inside and outside the organizations [Beauregard et al., 2019]. Communication must be continuous and advanced, as the management must be informed by the employees on the working hours, the workplace, the progress of the work and the dates scheduled for the completion. Lack of adequate communication between employees and managers can hinder the use of flexible working modalities and, consequently, influence the organizational effectiveness.

2.4 Flexible Working Outcomes

Previous literature has focused on various aspects related to flexible working arrangements due to the great interest these tools have aroused. Considering the specificities of smart working, the emergency context in which it has spread has and the mandatory use for many organizations, it is easy to suppose that this change may have implications of different nature, which must be carefully managed to reduce issues and obtain the desired outcomes. This section summarizes the effects of flexible working practices on employees, management, organization, and society identified and discussed in previous research.

2.4.1 Satisfaction & Commitment

Several studies investigated the influence of flexible working on employees' satisfaction.

While some underlined the occurrence of negative consequences [e.g., Curzi et al., 2020; Suh and Lee, 2017], most results showed a positive relationship between flexible working practices and employees' satisfaction [Vega et al., 2014; Coenen and Kok, 2014; Bentley et al., 2016; Felstead and Henseke, 2017; Morrison and Macky, 2017; Göçer et al., 2018]. These methods increase the employees' control over their life, offering the opportunity to work during times more suitable to their personal needs. In addition, they improve employees' overall perception and feelings towards the organizations, since they provide a signal that organization appreciates and cares about them [McNall et al., 2010], promoting greater well-being and physiological commitment [Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002]. Chen and Fulmer (2017) found a positive relationship between FWAs and organizational commitment, defined as the strength that comes from an individual's identification and involvement in a particular organization [Mowday et al., 1982]. This commitment is suggested also by other studies, as smart employees work longer hours than traditional employees even without additional payment or remuneration [e.g., Michelson, 2000; Duxbury & Higgins, 2002; Peters, Wetzels, & Tijdens, 2008].

Considering the high changes the flexible working arrangements involves for employees, the literature has investigated the impact of previous remote work experiences on their subsequent perceptions. Since employees who have previously participated in a flexible work arrangement perceive fewer administrative barriers and recognize greater benefits, their satisfaction is higher than that of employees without any prior experience [Wickramasinghe & Jayabandu, 2007; Charron & Lowe, 2005]. The impact of previous experience and a greater familiarity with these methods on employee perceptions and satisfaction becomes even more important in this research, since at the beginning of the pandemic emergency most organizations were forced to adopt this method suddenly, without any kind of preparation.

However, the relationship between flexible working arrangements and employee satisfaction and commitment needs further investigation. Some studies [e.g., Chen & Fulment, 2017; Curzi et al., 2020] noted that there was no significant difference in organizational commitment levels between employees that use smart working and those who simply have the option of FWAs but no use them. Consequently, these studies suggest that an increase in organizational commitment is not purely related to FWAs, but that also other elements have a significant role.

In addition, it is necessary to consider the distinction between voluntary and compulsory flexible working arrangements. Employees who are forced to use flexible working methods develop different working attitudes than those who are given the option to use them, especially if they do not need flexibility [Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2004].

Despite a direct or indirect positive relation, there are also conflicting studies that describe FWAs in a negative light. These studies argue that FWAs may have unintended effects, such as an increase in work–life conflict, potential career penalties, less management support, not recognized and appreciated commitment, less commitment due to less control [Hammer et al., 2005; Leslie et al., 2012]. Indeed, changing to remote working, workers could face a disruption not only from an operational point of view, but also from an individual and social level due to the lack of face-to-face interaction, in terms of social relations and recognition [Zhang, 2016].

2.4.2 Organization & Performance

Smart working implementation raises new administrative barriers, such as work scheduling, coordination, control, and performance evaluation issues, but also equity problems, as flexible working methods may not be available to all employees [Scandura & Lankau, 1997; Lawrence & Corwin, 2003; Charron & Lowe, 2005]. When considering the adoption or development of smart working, to maintain or boost performance it is crucial to modify and finetune organizational systems, procedures, methods, and practices [Flynn, 1995; Baruch, 2000]. The right organizational structure creates a work environment that enables employees to achieve organizational goals with greater responsibility and autonomy, with a direct effect also on their feelings and motivations [Wijewardena et al. 2014]. Autonomy is defined as the degree to which the organization provides freedom, independence, and discretion to employees in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used to do it. It is considered a key element in the FWAs adoption because, although most employees are willing to work within the broad constraints of an organization, they want a certain degree of freedom. As predicted by the job characteristic model [Hackman & Oldham, 1975], autonomy enhances employee satisfaction and motivation and, consequently, the performance on the job.

There are several research that study the impact of flexibility on performance, considering financial measures such as profitability, productivity, return on assets and return on investment [Baltes et al., 1999; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; Stavrou, 2005;]. Ruth and Chaudhry (2008) argue that smart working increase worker productivity since it allows to increase output with the same number of employees or provide the same output with less headcount. These effects can result from the ability to attract talented workers that prefer flexible work schedules, from an increase in existing employee effort that improve the marginal productivity, or from a better cooperation between employees [Shepard III et al.,1996; Kelly et al., 2008]. However, most of the studies report mixed findings or no direct association with FWAs. In a review on this theme, de Menezes and Kelliher (2011) found indications that remote working may positively influence job performance, but any association differs from the type of flexible work and employee perceptions. Moreover, flexible working methods increase motivation and profitability only when implemented within an employee-centered strategy and not for external influence or with a mandatory adoption, considering the specific characteristics and needs of the workers and involving them in all stages of implementation [Lee & DeVoe, 2012; Grawitch et al., 2009]. Therefore, the provision of these programs alone, even when workers perceive their potentiality, does not guarantee a direct improvement in organizational performance.

2.4.3 Work-Life Balance

Greater autonomy not only improves employee's satisfaction and productivity, but also helps them to cope work-life balance [Galinsky, Bond, & Sakai, 2011]. In fact, Albion (2004) noted that work–family benefits are more important predictors of using flexible working methods than any other positive effect or perceived barriers.

In view of the multiple perspectives of the concept of work-life balance and its difference from one society to another and from one culture to another, researchers and writers differ in its definition. Using the definition given by Forris (2015), which is fair between the various sides, work-life balance is defined as the ability of individuals to strike a balance between their personal life and those of people around him, and between their personal life and the set of tasks and duties assigned to them.

There are two types of work-family conflict: strain-based conflict, which occurs when participation in one role produces stress that is carried into the other, and time-based conflict, which occurs when participation in one role prevents to spend time in another role. This interference can occur from work to family, but also from family to work.

Although some studies report negative outcomes in terms of work-family conflict [Vittersø et al., 2003; Lapierre & Allen, 2006; Kossek et al. 2006; Ordoñez, 2012;], most studies indicate the advantages of remote working. Increased flexibility impacts employee well-being as they can focus on healthier lifestyles and better

sleep behaviors, thereby resulting in improved health and safety [Tavares, 2017; Wayne et al., 2006; Grzywacz et al., 2008]. Moreover, smart working provides autonomy and flexibility to carry out free time activities or family and duties [Allen, 2001; Ammons & Markham, 2004; Crosbie & Moore, 2004; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Hill et al., 2003] more than in traditional working conditions [Duxbury & Higgins, 2002]. For this reason, as stated earlier, smart workers are often more motivated and enjoy higher job satisfaction than conventional workers [Spillman & Markham, 1997; Himmelsbach, 1998; James, 2004].

Nevertheless, the implications of work-life balance initiatives on worker wellbeing have yet to be fully explored. Flexible work schedules can force employees, especially those who are unable to plan their time properly, to extend working hours even until late at night or starting earlier in the morning, with consequences on their health [Omondo et al., 2018; Knauth, 2007]. Moreover, working from home without human connection can generate social and professional isolation [Charalampous et al., 2019].

2.4.4 Environment

From a societal point of view, the impact of smart working on environment, mobility and socioeconomic aspects is relevant to determine whether further adoption is useful and sustainable for the society in a long-term perspective [Tom van Lier et al., 2012; Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016]. By reducing or eliminating the commute to work, with fewer CO_2 emissions and less traffic congestion problems, and reducing energy consumption in organizations' offices and buildings, FWAs could be a useful tool to protect and improve the environment [Verbeke et al., 2008; Nidumolu et al., 2009]. Although these benefits, in some ways, are easily achievable with a correct understanding and an adequate strategy, the impact of FWAs on society is still poorly understood and considered (Glaister, 2008). Only recently, researchers have emphasized the FWAs adoption as an integral part of a more societal corporate culture, but only during disrupted events resulting from natural disasters or crises that make it impossible for employees to be in the workplace, as in the case of Covid-19.

2.5 Literature Summary

Flexible working arrangements studies emerge from several research disciplines, providing well documented information about the reasons for use, the factors that favor or prevent the adoption, the effects of their introduction, the influence of individual and organizational characteristics, and the expected outcomes. Considering the literature review, a rich set of knowledge on flexible working methods are mainly related to the employee perspective but, despite the importance, studies on the management perspective and on the perceived difference between these two perspectives are still limited [Downes & Koekemoer, 2014; Trippi & Mattei, 2020]. Several authors have identified the factors that seem to influence the smart working adoption

and the perception of workers, but almost no research has focused on the factors that determine the willingness to adopt it in the future after a previous experience [Tripi & Mattei, 2020]. Moreover, almost all these studies have been conducted on a voluntary adoption perspective of flexible working practices, mainly introduced considering the organizational and individual needs.

The main information and results of the previous research are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Literature Review

Flexible Working Arrangements						
Enablers			**Outcomes**			
Individual Characteristics	*Job Characteristics*	*Organization*	*Satisfaction & Commitment*	*Organization & Performance*	*Work-Life Balance*	*Environment*
• Family Structure - *Dual earner couple* - *Household activities* • Age - *Openess to innovation* - *Working approach*	• Suitable Jobs and Workers • External Business Units	• Management support • Trust • Control and Evaluation Systems	+ Free Time and Well-being + Motivation + Previous Experiences - Work-life conflict - Career penalties - Effort recognition - Social problems	- Administrative barriers + Autonomy • Performance - *Productivity* - *Suitable job and worker* - *Employee centered strategy*	+ Work-family Conflict + Well-being + Free Time - Longer working days - Isolation	+ Pollution + Traffic congestion + Energy consumption + Disrupted events

3. METHODOLOGY

The aim of this research is to verify whether same smart working method, applied without considering the specific characteristics and needs of workers and individual organizational units, can lead or not to different perceptions and opinions across different units. In addition, a second level of analysis focuses on the impact that the organizational role can have on workers' perception, making a distinction between employees and managers. The goal is not only to test generally accepted theories in this field, but also to consider existing theory to explore new areas of research, analyzing the information provided by the selected population.

As the research investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context. and this phenomenon is complex, unusual, ambiguous, and context-dependent, the most suitable method to conduct this research is the case study. To make the research more robust [Herriott & Firestone, 1983], since the evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, the holistic approach with multiple cases on a single unit of analysis was used. Moreover, data was collected through open-ended interviews on different levels of analysis, which allowed to focus more on the thoughts, feelings and of the participants.

As emerges from the literature review, many studies have examined flexible working methods in their various aspects: the factors that determine their introduction or not within the organization, the factors that bring out the need and their use by workers, the factors that influence the perceptions of the participants, the effects on employees and organization activities, the impact on work-life balance and so on. However, the analysis of these research is carried out in situations where flexible working methods were voluntary introduced by the organization and used by employees, with a certain degree of preparation and adaptation to the different factors involved. Therefore, emerges that these studies are based on a common assumption: the possibility, both for employees and employers, to adopt or not tools specifically defined on their needs.

With the Covid-19 pandemic, however, most organizations and employees have been forced to use flexible working methods, in particular smart working, without preparation and adaptation to the contexts in which it was introduced. Consequently, to verify whether the same smart working methods can lead to different perceptions, in addition to the factors emerged from the previous literature that are usable in this context, the research also include the elements not adequately considered. For example, most studies focus primarily on the employee perspective, considering the views of managers and organization only in the initial introduction and implementation phase. Even when the opinion of managers was studied, there is no comparison between the opinion of employees and managers to determine whether the role may influence their perception. Moreover, the factors that influence workers' perception on flexible working practices are considered, but few studies analyze how these tools could be improved for a future and structured use.

Starting from the research context defined within the primary research question, these elements are researched and discussed within the Regione Calabria. The analysis involves three different organizational units within three different department, within which open-ended interviews were carried out with 1 manager and 2

employees for each units considered. This represents a typical case of extensive and undifferentiated application of smart working during the health emergency, in which employees and managers had to use this tool suddenly and with little preparation.

As will be seen in the following sections, to define the interviewees' perceptions on smart working and the factors that influenced them, different information was collected, such as individual characteristics, job satisfaction, perceived advantages and disadvantages, and the willingness to use this tool in the future. By analyzing these data and considering the perceptions emerged during the interviews, it is possible to discuss the results obtained and compare them with the information contained and extrapolated from previous research.

3.1   Research Method

The research is exploratory with multiple case study and aim to analyze the existing theory and the new results on the relationship between smart working and workers' perceptions through the acquisition of new knowledge and the review of literature and topics previously examined [Saunders & Lewis, 2012], as these studies are still inconclusive and limited.

First rationale for conducting a multiple case study, as said before, is that the evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall research is therefore regarded as being more robust [Herriot & Firestone, 1983]. A second rationale is that the theory has not specified a clear set of propositions believed to be true, as most of them reports mixed findings. Consequently, to confirm, challenge or expand the existing theory, the comparison between different cases is more appropriate because it allows to verify if each units considered predicts similar results or predicts contrasting results but for predictable reasons [Yin, 2005].

This is a holistic case study, as multiple cases (organizational units) are considered on a single unit of analysis (Regione Calabria). It is necessary to underline that the analysis does not focus only on the different cases, but it is also conducted within the individual cases, collecting information on two levels: managers and employees. The qualitative research of these primary data was carried out through open-ended interviews submitted with the identified population, and this data were then processed and combined with secondary data obtained from an in-depth analysis of the previous literature.

3.1.2 Research Question

The main research question was defined to assess whether same smart working methods can lead to different perceptions among the workers of the same organization. The study tries to identify the individual and work factors that can influence their perceptions, the perceived advantages and disadvantages of smart working, and the aspects that could be improved for its future adoption. Furthermore, the research aims to verify whether these perceptions can also be influenced by the role held, making a distinction between employees and managers. As a result, during the interviews some questions differed according to the role held by the interviewee.

Individual Characteristics

The purpose of this topic is to understand if individual characteristics can influence the perception of managers and employees on smart working. The research includes and evaluates the factors identified in the previous literature, also trying to provide further useful information. The interview question was as follows:

1. Tell me about yourself (e.g., gender, age, education, family structure).

Job characteristics & Satisfaction

The second topic aim to understand whether specific work factors and job satisfaction can positively or negatively influence workers' perception on smart working. Moreover, considering the important implications and changes driven by a structural adoption of smart working, it was asked if they previously adopted flexible working methods to understand if previous experience may influence their current perception.
As for the manager, the research also focuses on the number of people managed, to understand if the size of the team can influence the perception of managers. The interview questions were as follows:

2. Tell me about your job (role, work environment, working hours, commuting).
3. Are you satisfied with your current job? What aspects would you improve?
4. Have you already adopted flexible working methods?

Advantages & Disadvantages

In this case, the research seeks to understand what employees and managers think about smart working and how they evaluate its adoption in recent months, focusing on the perceived benefits and difficulties, the impact

on their satisfaction and workload, the effects on their private life and on work-life balance. By asking the same question to both, it is possible to understand if benefits and issues perceived are the same.

The interview questions were as follows:

5. *What do you think of smart working?*
6. *How do you rate your overall experience during its adoption?*
7. *Do you think that working from home is more demanding?*

Organization

The goal of this point is to understand if employees consider smart working an optimal working method for the organization in terms of coordination, control, evaluation, commitment, relationship, and impact on performance. By asking the same question to both managers and employees, individual perceived benefits and difficulties can be compared. In addition, managers are asked what advantages and difficulties they have observed for employees. The interview questions were as follows:

8. *What were the benefits and difficulties for the organization?*
9. *What challenges and benefits have you observed for employees?*
10. *Do you believe that smart working affect individual and organizational performance?*

Future

The final topic highlight whether employees and managers would like to adopt smart working in the future or prefer the traditional working methods. By asking the same questions, the research verify whether the managers' willingness to adopt smart working is the same or differ from that of employees. Moreover, it verifies if managers would like employees will adopt smart working in the future.

The interview questions were as follows:

11. *If you had the possibility to choose, would you adopt smart working in the future too?*
12. *Would you like smart working will be adopted by employees?*
13. *What improvements should be made?*

3.1.3 Research population

The research population consists of six workers in total: 3 managers, who presented their opinion and from the point of view of the organization and 3 employees, who operate within the organizational units of the selected managers.

The population was selected based on the requirements of the research question (Yin, 2005) and based on personal network and relationships, identifying one manager and one employee from different departments to expand the consistency and diversity of the study.

All the research population, though with some differences, was involved in a forced and uniform implementation of smart working during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The participants were all contacted by telephone or e-mail with a brief indication of the research project and the structure of the interview. This was carried out by telephone, in compliance with the health provisions and the availability of the interviewees. For reasons of confidentiality and privacy, the people interviewed asked not to publicly mention their names; each of them has been assigned an identifying symbol, thus avoiding naming them during the research. The following table summarizes the research population and indicates how they will be indicated.

Table 3 – Research population

Organizational Units	**Interviewees**	**Roles**
Territorial Authority for Regional Public Construction "**Organizational Unit A**"	**Manager A**	Technical service – Cosenza
	Employee A	Administrative
Unitary Programming "**Organizational Unit B**"	**Manager B**	Strategic Projects and International Cooperation
	Employee B	Team
Labor, Training and Social Policies "**Organizational Unit C**"	**Manager C**	Youth and Female Entrepreneurship
	Employee C	Administrative

3.2 Data Process

For the completeness of the study, both primary and secondary data were analyzed. Primary data refer to those collected. through interviews with the specific purpose of answering research questions. Secondary data are based on pre-existing sources or documents elaborated in previous studies, that had different purposes but are related to the specific research [Hox & Boeije, 2005]. The discussion is mainly based on primary data, while secondary data are used to confirm or refute the results obtained.

3.2.1 Primary Data

The primary data, which play a central role in the research, contain the information collected during meetings with managers and employees of the various organizational units considered. Given the exploratory nature of the study, a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions on specific topics was used as a research tool. This allowed to submit the main questions, which represent the key points of the research, and to include further questions on the topics emerged during the interview, guaranteeing a certain degree of flexibility and autonomy within the conversations.

In this way, it was possible to deepen some themes or explore others, leaving the interviewees free to express their idea and opinion on the topic without affecting their feelings and responses [Saunders & Lewis, 2012]. Furthermore, given the double level of analysis with employees and managers, the semi-structured approach made it possible to adapt some questions to the type of interviewee, to his specific characteristics, to the peculiarities of his job and organizational unit.

The details of the questions administered, as well as their purpose and explanation, are presented on the previous pages. The interviews lasted between 25 and 60 minutes and, with the consent of the interviewees, were recorded to allow for literal transcription.

3.2.2 Secondary Data

According to Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019), there are two different approaches to reviewing literature: systematic review and narrative review. Within this research, the narrative method was adopted, according to which the literature review is used as a tool to increase the awareness on the topics previously studied and on those contained within the research. Furthermore, a systematic method would not have been suitable as flexibility was needed in the analysis phase to refine the purpose of the research.

To provide a clear and complete theoretical framework on the topics of this research, the literature review first consists of a general introduction of flexible working methods, then focused on smart working in Italy and in relation to the Covid-19 emergency. After having limited the research field, the conditions for adopting flexible working methods and their impact were considered.

3.2.3 Data Analysis

The findings collected through the interviews are analyzed together with the secondary data in the next section. A general analytical strategy was developed following the theoretical hypotheses that conducted the case study [Yin, 2005]. In particular, the first strategy adopted is the "Configuration comparison", in which the empirical information gathered during the analysis (empirical configuration) are compared with the theory identified in the previous literature (theoretical configuration) [Trochim, 1989]. Moreover, the "Thematic analysis" was also used, since the empirical information gathered through the interviews was examined and divided into main topics, through wich it was possible to define the final analysis [Braun & Clarke, 2006].

To strengthen these main strategies, the integrated analysis units, i.e. the smaller units within a case study [Yin, 2005], were also considered. In fact, within each case study (Organizational unit A, Organizational unit B, Organizational unit C), information on both employees and managers was collected to obtain a better understanding of the case as whole.

Previous information and personal feelings were not considered at any stage of the research. Rather, the considerations and sensations were used exclusively during the interviews, to direct the answers towards the topics of greater interest, and during the analysis of the sub-research questions, to give a unitary meaning to the information collected and answer to the main research question.

3.3   Research Quality

Since a research design is supposed to represent a logical set of statement, four test are commonly used to establish the quality of an empirical research: construct validity, internal validity, external validity, reliability.

3.3.1 Internal Validity

For the internal validity of the research, the logic of patter-matching was used.

As mentioned earlier, an empirically based pattern was compared with several alternative predictions. The information collected through the interviews was compared with the dependent and independent variables identified through the analysis of the previous literature. Furthermore, for the purpose of the research, this approach was applied to multiple-case studies to carry out a cross-case analysis, and not simply an analysis of each individual case.

3.3.2 Construct Validity

To satisfy the construct validity test, the research must cover two steps [Yin, 2005]:

1. Select the specific types of changes to study and
2. Demonstrate that the selected measures of these changes do indeed reflect the specific types of changes that have been selected.

One principle to increase construct validity in a case study is to establish a chain of evidence.

In this research, the measures selected to study the perception of smart workers derives not only from the analysis of the literature developed in previous years, but also from the opinions and the information gathered during the interviews. Following the literature review and the information collected, it clearly emerges which factors influence the adoption and the perception on smart working. Consequently, based on the guidance provided by the literature review and open-ended questions, the research demonstrates validity, defined as the extent to which the questions and data accurately represent the concept [Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2013].

3.3.3 Reliability

The object of reliability is to minimize errors and bias in the research, allowing to an external observer to follow the derivation of any evidence from the initial research question to the case study conclusions. Furthermore, a reliable study allows to trace the steps in either direction, not only from the question to the conclusions, but also from the conclusion back to the initial research question.

This study report not only the procedures followed in the earlier studies, but also every step to answer its main research question, from the initial idea to the conclusion. Consequently, following the information presented in the previous section, the chain of evidence can also be used for the reliability.

Moreover, the assumptions made to choose the literature, the workers to be interviewed, and the main research question were based only on the aspects considered in the previous studies and on the information emerged

during the interviews, without considering opinion or feelings. In this way, the research is more reliable as data collection and analysis were not affected, but simply interpreted to provide a unitary meaning and answer to the main research question.

3.3.4 External Validity

The external validity test deals with the problem of knowing whether a study's findings are generalizable beyond the immediate case study [Yin, 2005]. This generalization, however, is not automatic, but it must be tested by replicating the findings in in other studies, where the research has specified that the same results should occur. Once such direct replications have been made, the results might be accepted as providing strong support for the research.

Since this study is based on analytical generalization, the replicability of the results will be possible only within certain limits: same smart working methods, mandatory adoption, different roles and organizational units.

4.   EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This section shows the primary data collected during the interviews carried out with the research population.

It is divided into paragraphs for each organizational unit considered, within which a brief description of the organizational unit is made to give indication on the context and the data acquired by manager and employee are reported. These data are divided into categories that correspond to the main points of the research to facilitate a link between what has been highlighted in the previous literature, what the research aims to analyze and what emerges from the information obtained through the interviews. At the end of each paragraph there is a table that summarizes the opinions of manager and employee on the main research topics.

Initially, after the description of the organizational unit, the individual characteristic of each interviewee is reported. In this way, as previously mentioned, the research aims to understand if the elements found in previous studies, such as age, sex, family structure and education, can affect the workers' perception of smart working according to the interviewees.

The first section, "Job & Satisfaction", contains data on the characteristics of their work in terms of hours worked, other jobs outside the Regione Calabria, time to reach the workplace, the overall satisfaction of the role and tasks, and aspects they would like to improve. In this way, the research aims to identify the specific characteristics of their work and the overall satisfaction to verify if there is any link between these elements and the perception on smart working.

The second section, "Smart Working", contains the overall considerations of workers on the period spent in smart working during the Covid-19 pandemic, also including the perceived advantages and disadvantages in carrying out their work and in their private life. This information allows not only to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages perceived by each interviewee, but also to compare them with each other and with the indications provided by the previous literature.

The third section, "Smart working & Commitment", contains information on the commitment required during the period in smart working, in terms of work, work-life balance, and workers well-being. These data are also useful for making a comparison, in the analysis phase, between the commitment assumed by employees and that perceived by managers.

The "Smart working & Organization" section collects the perceptions of managers and employees from an organizational point of view, considering the impact of smart working on the control, evaluation, coordination, and involvement systems. Moreover, interviewees express their considerations on the possible impact of smart working on overall performance, indicating, if any, which factors determine it or not.

The last section, "Smart working & Future", contains the willingness of managers and employees to adopt or not the smart working in the future, also including the improvements that should be introduced for its effective implementation.

4.1　Organizational Unit "A"

The Territorial Company for Regional Public Construction (Azienda Territoriale per l'Edilizia Residenziale Pubblica, ATERP) was established in 2013 from the merger of the different provincial ATERPs. It is a non-economic public institution, with auxiliary functions to the Regione Calabria of a technical-operational nature in the field of public construction, with legal personality and organizational, administrative, and accounting autonomy.

ATERP is divided into territorial districts (Catanzaro, Reggio Calabria, Cosenza, Crotone and Vibo Valentia) and its legal and administrative headquarter is in Catanzaro.

The purposes of this Authority are determined by the national and regional laws in force on public building, basing its administrative action on the criteria of economy, effectiveness, impartiality, publicity, and transparency, in compliance with the regional policy guidelines. In particular:

- Elaborates proposals for the allocation of financial resources reserved for public buildings and for the implementation of specific programs to meet the needs of the territory.
- Carries out subsidized public building interventions aimed at the construction of new plants, the purchase and recovery of degraded plants, and the urban and environmental redevelopment interventions using own infrastructures, services, and financial resources and other public or private entities.
- Manages and controls their own assets and those entrusted by other local authorities.
- Designs, participates, and implements urban regeneration programs for public or private entities, as well as recovers and upgrade confiscated properties for reception, inclusion, and social participation purposes.
- Provides consultancy, technical assistance, study, research, and experimentation for public and private operators.

4.1.1　Manager A

Manager A is the manager of the technical service of Cosenza district.

He is 43 and married. Both are workers. They have two children, and both take care of household activities on days off or when their partner is working. After graduation, he continued his studies with a master's degree.

Work & Satisfaction

He was promoted to interim manager for the technical service of the Cosenza district the last year. Consequently, during the Covid-19 pandemic, he first held the role of employee, then the dual role of manager and employee.

Today he manages a team of 8 internal resources, with whom he has established a good personal and professional relationship.

He does not carry out other jobs outside the Regione Calabria, as he works full time and does not have the desire and the need to do other activities.

He did not change residence for work, and it does not take long to arrive at the workplace.

He is satisfied with his work, as it is consistent with his academic and professional background and guarantees him gratification. In addition, the promotion to manager has amplified his job satisfaction, even if it is challenging to fill this double role. He is very satisfied with the physical and non-physical environment in which he carries out his work activities, even if the Regione Calabria has a low degree of digitization, which he considers physiological.

Despite the overall satisfaction, he argues that the organization should increase the workforce. The lack of human resources within its organizational unit, and in general in the Regione Calabria, does not allow to carry out one's tasks effectively, dispersing the commitment in various activities. This lack has been amplified by smart working, since physical presence in the office increases an effective distribution of the resources based on "needs" (for example, the sudden need of a customer).

Smart working

Manager A evaluates the experience in smart working very positively, both in the period as an employee and in the period in which he held the dual role. By working from home, tasks that did not require teamwork could be done much more effectively and quickly, without any interference from colleagues, superiors, or users. Furthermore, less control and greater autonomy have led to a greater responsibility, with positive effects on his commitment. As an executive, however, he noted that the combination of these two elements could negatively impact the engagement of some employees, who could take advantage to work less.

The first phase of implementation of smart working, the "preparation" phase, represented one of the main problems, primarily due to the lack of digital know-how of older employees or those not used to carry out their activities using technological devices.

Furthermore, working from home made it difficult to find data, documents, and other information easily available in the office, and this difficulty was amplified by the low digitization of the Public Administration.

These difficulties have been perceived more as smart working has been used for a long time.

Smart working & Commitment

Despite a greater overall satisfaction, working from home requires longer and more demanding working days, in addition to housework and childcare. The domestic environment, in physical and non-physical aspects, was adequate to carry out his tasks and, in some cases, it was better than the organizational environment.

During the smart working period, Manager A had no more free time than he would have had working in the office. As a result, he could not engage in other activities to improve his physical and mental well-being.

Smart working & Organization

From an organizational point of view, the monitoring and control system was inadequate, as employee self-compiled reports were used. These reports were included in the organizational documents, but the worker in charge of control, being engaged in other activities, did not adequately verify the veracity of the statements. Furthermore, even in cases where these reports were true, this monitoring system did not allow to verify the commitment and results during the intermediate steps. As mentioned earlier, the less control and the greater autonomy have had an ambiguous impact. Furthermore, smart working had a negative impact on coordination with the other organizational units of the Regione Calabria.

All these aspects can affect the overall performance.

In addition to the aspects indicated above, the negative impact on performance derives also from a lower involvement of employees, especially for those who, due to the individual characteristics or the type of job, tend to isolate themselves.

These negative effects, however, are more than offset by the positives. Manager A believe that, despite some limitations, smart working can positively influence the performance, since it allows to carry out activities more efficiently and effectively, reducing distractions and unexpected events and increasing the autonomy and commitment of workers. Furthermore, employees perceive an improvement in the commitment-recognition ratio because the reports are self-compiled, and the results are not substantially verified.

Smart working & Future

In this phase of slow return to normal, returning to the office was not a problem for safety and health.

Manager A hopes that in the future smart working will be adopted in a mixed method, between work from home and work in the office. This would make it possible to overcome the problems of relationship, control and, more generally, of implementation listed in the previous points. Furthermore, with the aim of overcoming the traditional organization of work, which has become obsolete, alternation would be an excellent middle ground.

To adopt smart working structurally, it is necessary to introduce managerial figures who deal exclusively with the management and the coordination of all the activities carried out from home. Furthermore, based on his experience in the dual role (employee and manager), he observed that smart working is a tool suitable only for "administrative" activities, that are repeated over time and easily measurable, and not for managerial activities or contact with customer and users.

4.1.2 Employee A

Employee A works within the administrative service.

He is 58 years old and married. The wife is a worker. They have two adult children who, consequently, no longer reside with them. He did not take care of domestic activities during Covid-19 and generally he does not deal with it. He holds a bachelor's degree.

Work & Satisfaction

Employee A generally carries out administrative and contact activities with the public, working from home in some periods. He works full time and, even if he had the time available, he would not employ him in another job. He has not changed residence for work, and it does not take long to get to the workplace.

The work he does is a source of gratification and personal fulfillment. Furthermore, the excellent relationship established with colleagues, managers, and people from other organizational units with whom he constantly comes into contact, determines a high level of satisfaction. Beyond these aspects, however, he is not very satisfied with the work environment. The devices used are outdated, both from hardware and software point of view, and this hindered the performance of activities and the coordination with colleagues. Like the manager, he hopes for greater digitization of the Public Administration. Unlike him, however, he argues that the digitization process within the Regione Calabria is not underway, or at least it is at too low level. Moreover, like the manager, he argues that the lack of human resources reduces the efficiency of his job. Unlike the

manager, however, he believes that smart working does not amplify this problem: for some activities the lack of staff is compensated by the smart working, while for others it is amplified.

Smart working

Employee A evaluates the smart working experience very positively.

Its introduction did not lead to significant changes in his working life, as it adopted remote working even before the Covid-19 pandemic. Working from home allows to carry out tasks with greater tranquility and without distractions, independently organizing the time to devote to work according to personal needs.

Like the manager, he argues that monitoring and evaluation were a major challenge, since colleagues who "did not work in the office, work even less from home". Furthermore, the lack of data, documents and information was also a problem.

Despite the positive consideration on smart working, Employee A decided to return to the office whenever he could.

Smart working & Commitment

Working from home required longer and more demanding working days on average but, with the right organization, it also made it possible to obtain free time. Consequently, Employee A believes that smart working has a positive impact on work-life balance, since it allows to adapt commitment and time based on the activities to be performed. However, working from home did not have a positive impact on physical and mental well-being, as the "gained" time was dedicated to organizing the work for the following days.

Moreover, the domestic environment was adequate to perform his tasks and, in some cases, it was better than the organizational environment.

Smart working & Organization

From an organizational point of view, Employee A argues that the monitoring and control system were not adequate. Unlike the manager, however, he claims that the final reports compiled by employees were regularly checked by the department manager. The increased autonomy had a positive impact. Furthermore, he argues that smart working has had no impact on his involvement or coordination with the workers of other organizational units.

Smart working has a positive impact on organizational performance.

First, less control and greater autonomy translate into greater satisfaction and, consequently, this has a positive impact on performance. However, the performance evaluation was less effective during the smart working.

Smart working & Future

For the Employee A, returning to the office is not a safety and health issue.

Not only does he hope that smart working will be adopted in the future, but he also believes that the process of radical change in the work organization is already underway, and for this reason "there is no turning back". Like the manager, he argues that home-office alternation is the best solution, especially for activities that must necessarily be carried out in person (i.e., contact with the public). As a result, smart working is not applicable to all positions and jobs within the Regione Calabria.

4.1.3 To Summarize

The main points discussed with the manager and employee are shown in Table 4 on the next page.

Table 4 – Main Topics in Organizational Unit A

Topics	Manager A	Employee A
Individual Characteristics	• 43 years old, married, two children • Dual Earner Couple • Household activities	• 58 years old, married, 2 children with different residence • Dual Earner Couple • No Household activities
Work & Satisfaction	• Dual role • Team: 8 internal resources • No Commuting • Satisfied • Lack of Human resources	• Administrative • No Commuting • Positive Relationships • Low Digitalization • Lack of Human resources
Smart working	• Positive Perception • More Efficiency, Autonomy, Responsibility • Ambiguous Employees Engagement • Difficulties for older employees • Low Digitalization of PA	• Very Positive Perception • Previous Experiences • Efficiency, Autonomy • Ambiguous Employees Engagement • Low Digitalization of PA • In Office whenever he could
SW & Commitment	• Longer and Demanding • No Free Time • No Greater Well-being	• Longer and Demanding • Free Time • Work-Life balance • No Greater Well-being
SW & Organization	• Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Inadequate • Ambiguous Employee Engagement • Less External Coordination • Positive Impact on Performance	• Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Inadequate • Ambiguous Employee Engagement • No Impact on Coordination • No Impact on Performance
Future	• Alternation • Introduce Managerial Figures • Only for Administrative	3 Alternation 4 Suitable Jobs and Workers

4.2   Organizational Unit "B"

The "Unitary Programming" Department carries out coordination activities of the programming, management, monitoring, surveillance, and evaluation process of the various European, national and regional programs, to identify priorities and promote an intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth through concrete actions for citizens, businesses and institutions.

This department define and make operational the governance program, identifying the homogeneous areas of action, the most suitable financial and programmatic tools, the operational actions and the strategic interventions.

The objectives of the Unitary Programming are:

- Design and implement strategies for growth, competitiveness, and employment within a framework of environmental sustainability and social inclusion
- Carry out a network function between the competent offices and the programs and financial instruments
- Increase the territory competitiveness factors using national and community financial resources with a view to complementarity and integration
- Promote administrative simplification with measures able to streamline procedures
- Monitor the progress of the programs through continuous assessments, proposing corrective and synergistic actions to reduce critical issues.

These initiatives aim at a common set of thematic objectives, that derive directly from the 3 major strategic priorities of Europe 2020: smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. In particular:

- Strengthen research, technological development and innovation
- Support the transition to a low carbon economy
- Promote adaptation to climate change, risk management and prevention
- Preserve and protect the environment promoting resource efficiency
- Promote sustainable transport and remove bottlenecks in network infrastructures
- Promote sustainable and quality employment, supporting the mobility of workers
- Promote social inclusion and the fight against poverty and discrimination
- Investing in education and training for skills acquisition and lifelong learning
- Implement efficient public administration.

4.2.1 Manager B

Manager B is responsible for Strategic Projects and International Cooperation.

He is 47 years old and married. Both are workers. They have a son. He does not take care of the household and care activities thanks to the service of other people. After graduating, he continued his studies with several masters.

Work & Satisfaction

He held the role of manager for several years, albeit in different sectors of the Regione Calabria.

He manages a team made of 3 internal resources, with whom he has a good personal and professional relationship, and 6 external consultants. He did not change residence for work, despite taking a lot of time to get to the office, and this causes dissatisfaction. However, Manager B spends many of his working days remotely due to the nature of his tasks.

He does not carry out other jobs outside the Regione Calabria, as he works full time and does not have the desire and the need to carry out other activities. He is very satisfied with his work and his role, claiming it is the best possible occupation within the organization, and this guarantees a high level of fulfillment and gratification.

Working in the office, he is not satisfied with the physical environment in which he operates, defining it as outdated, lacking the latest technologies and less adequate than the devices in his home. Given the type of work, however, he does not spend much time in the office: he mainly travels or use teleworking (even before Covid).

Furthermore, his dissatisfaction stems from a lack of trust from the organization towards employees and managers (and vice versa), with negative effects on the commitment and on the overall efficiency, and this could be overcome through more adequate performance measurement systems. He also argues that a greater concentration of internal resources on the main activities of the organization would be necessary, avoiding the continuous fragmentation and shifting on various activities.

Smart working

Manager B evaluates the work experience in smart working "absolutely positive".

Even in the periods preceding the health emergency he often carried out their main activities through flexible methods; for this reason, it did not perceive any difference with the mandatory adoption of smart working. In

addition, over the years, it has repeatedly urged the organization to structurally introduce flexible working method.

The main advantages of working from home concern the flexibility and autonomy with which he was able to organize working days, freely choosing the most suitable moments to carry out certain activities. This leads to greater satisfaction and, consequently, has a positive impact on the productivity. On the contrary, the main problems encountered in using smart working are attributable to less effective supervision than office work and to IT security problems.

Smart working & Commitment

Working from home does not requires more effort and, on the contrary, the greater flexibility and autonomy allow to take breaks at any time. In addition, this reduces the stress of working days, allowing to have more time for other activities that increase physical and psychological well-being.
Working days are longer and more demanding only for workers who were unable to effectively organize their work even when working in the office.

Smart working & Organization

One of the main problems, from an organizational point of view, is the employee monitoring and evaluation processes. These are inadequate during the smart working adoption, as the self-completed report by employees is not credible and does not evaluate the most important aspects of a job. It would be advisable to introduce evaluation systems more focused on objectives and productivity, and not on hours worked.
Moreover, smart working negatively affects coordination with other organizational units, as these were not particularly committed to do their work adequately.

Despite these problems, Manager B argues that smart working has a positive effect on performance, especially for the possibility of self-organize work according to one's needs, having better conditions to carry it out with more serenity and more quickly. This positive impact is also amplified by the greater sense of responsibility due to the greater autonomy.
He did not perceive problems in the involvement and coordination of his team, nor negative influence on the relationships with colleagues and superiors.

However, he argues that smart working can have a positive impact on performance only if adopted by workers who were productive even in office but can have a negative impact if used by inefficient or unmotivated workers.

Smart working & Future

In this phase of slow return to normal, returning to the office was not perceived as a problem for safety and health.

As mentioned in the previous points, Manager B hopes that smart working will become the main way of working even after the Covid-19 pandemic. For this to happen, however, improvements need to be made.
First, it would be necessary to develop an internal platform, common to all public administrations, for the management of own work, for the internal communications and for the overall organization of workers.
The use of an internal platform, if developed adequately, would guarantee greater security of data and communications, which represent one of the main problems during smart working. Secondly, it would be necessary to introduce a measurement system of the performance no longer based on the number of hours worked, but on the productivity of hours worked, introducing intermediate goals and weekly face-to-face meetings. Finally, in addition to these specific operational improvements, there must be more trust within the organization.

4.2.2 Employee B

Employee B is an internal resource of the Regione Calabria within the team of the Manager B.
He is 56 years old, married and has 2 children with different residences. Consequently, he does not engage in household and care activities. He holds a bachelor's degree and several specialization courses.

Work & Satisfaction

Employee B is part of the technical secretariat team of the Unitary Programming.
He did not change residence for work, despite taking a long time to get to the office. This difficulty, however, is offset by the periods in which he works from home.

He is very satisfied with his work, defining it very stimulating and rewarding, despite in some periods it is quite demanding. The high satisfaction also derives from a high involvement in the organization of work and in the definition of the action plan. Although not having a managerial role, and therefore does not have "formal" responsibilities for achieving the results of the projects, the perceive responsibility is very high being part of a team with few internal resources. This leads to greater satisfaction and motivation, but also more dissatisfaction and stress.

Working in office, like the manager, he is not satisfied with the hardware and software tools available, arguing that these are not adequate to perform their tasks or, to make a comparison, they are less adequate than those used at home. Another element of dissatisfaction concerns the size of the team. Although there are six external consultants, Employee B believes that additional internal resources should be assigned.

Smart working

Employee B positively evaluates the smart working experience.
He did not perceive differences compared to the remote working methods adopted before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Working from home allows to organize the working day independently, deciding when to carry out the most demanding activities based on energy, motivation and other commitments, with positive effects on overall well-being.

Given the nature of their job, i.e., loans, funds, strategic projects, Employee B perceived data and information security as one of the most critical elements, since the Public Administration is not equipped with adequate protection systems to work remotely.

Smart working & Commitment

Like the manager, he argues that working from home was not more challenging and, on the contrary, the greater autonomy ensures greater satisfaction, since it is possible to organize independently the work.
This increased autonomy had a positive impact also on physical and mental well-being, as he was able to devote more time to his hobbies. As a result, smart working has improved his lifestyle.
Even when the working days have lengthened, the increase in working time was then compensated by more time available for other activities.

Smart working & Organization

Unlike the manager, he does not believe that the control system was inadequate, as the size of the team and the continuous contact between them did not require particular supervision. However, managers outside the team, due to fewer contact than office work, may not adequately recognize the commitment in carrying out his work. Furthermore, unlike the manager, he does not believe that smart working has a negative impact on coordination with colleagues on the team or other organizational units.

Employee B argues that smart working, while being a tool that increases worker productivity and satisfaction, does not have a completely positive effect on performance. Greater autonomy did not affect performance, or it did not affect more than the previous flexible working methods.
Any positive effect on performance, if any, may only derive from an alignment with the other organizational units, as they started using the same working methods.

Smart working & Future

In this phase of slow return to normal, returning to the office was not a problem for safety and health.

If Employee B had the possibility to choose, he would undoubtedly adopt smart working, as it determines various benefits and, if adequately supported, does not cause serious issues.
It is necessary to improve the software used, both in terms of performance and data security. Moreover, even if sporadically, it is necessary to physically go to the office to have direct contact with colleagues and managers who are not part of the own team. This contact is necessary both for the human-relations aspect and for control and evaluation. Finally, he believes that any type of work can be done in smart working.

4.2.3 To Summarize

The main points discussed with the manager and employees are shown in Table 5 on the next page.

Table 5 – Main Topics in Organizational Unit B

Topics	Manager B	Employee B
Individual Characteristics	• 47 years old, married, one child • Dual Earner Couple • No Household activities	• 56 years old, married, 2 children with different residence • Dual Earner Couple • No Household activities
Work & Satisfaction	• Team: 3 internal resources and 6 external consultants • Commuting, but often Travel for work or Telework • Very Satisfied • Low Digitalization • Lack of Human resources • No Organizational Trust	• Technician • Commuting, but often Travel for work or Telework • Satisfied, Motivated, Involved • Work Stimulating and Rewarding, despite Demanding • Low Digitalization • Lack of Human resources
Smart working	• Very Positive Perception • No differences with Previous Experiences • Autonomy, Responsibility, Satisfaction, Productivity • Ambiguous Employees Engagement • Data issues • Social & Environment	• Positive Perception • Previous Experiences • Efficiency, Autonomy • Data issues
SW & Commitment	• No Longer and Demanding • Free Time • Greater Well-being	• No Longer and Demanding • Free Time • Work-Life balance • Greater Well-being
SW & Organization	• Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Inadequate • Ambiguous Employee Engagement • No Impact on Coordination • Less External Coordination • Positive Impact on Performance, only for Suitable Workers	• No Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Inadequate • No Recognized Commitment by External Managers • No Impact on Coordination • No Less External Coordination • No Impact on Performance
Future	• Only Suitable Workers • Internal Platform • Evaluation Systems • Trust	5 No Only Suitable Workers 6 Internal Platform 7 In Office only for Relationships

4.3 Organizational Unit "C"

The Department of Labor, Training and Social Policies is an integrated organization of homogeneous, analogous, and complementary operating units, which are responsible for defining the programs to be implemented, as well as the direction and coordination activities at EU, national and regional level, to implement the objectives of work, training, and social policies. It is also responsible for the connection and control of the administrative action with the related sectors and services for social, labor, education, and training policies.

In particular, the "Youth and Female Entrepreneurship" sector promotes the adoption and use of new technologies in small businesses to increase their productivity, encouraging innovation in production processes and in the provision of services. Supporting innovation in the production system, especially for smaller companies that are less reactive in introducing innovations, allows greater adaptability to market dynamics (flexibility, speed, and network development). In particular, this sector supports the birth and development of businesses made up of young and female entrepreneurs, with projects characterized by innovation, creativity and enhancement of human capital. The objectives of the projects promoted are:

- Process, product, and service innovation

  The creation of innovative production and distribution methods, using innovative techniques and equipment in the regional production context

- Organizational innovation

  The use of innovative methods in the management of human resources, with positive effects on work-life balance. This, in turn, increase the performance of the company, improving its productivity or reducing it cost management

- Marketing innovation

  The implementation of new marketing methodologies that involve significant innovations in product promotion or pricing policies

- Eco – innovation

  Investments aimed at promoting the optimization of corporate environmental performance, reducing the environmental impact of production activities

- Safety

  Innovation or investments aimed at guaranteeing corporate social responsibility and better levels of safety at work.

4.3.1 Manager C

Manager C is responsible for the "Youth and Female Entrepreneurship" sector.

She is 42 and married. Both are involved in household and care actives, as they have two children aged 8 and 10. She is a lawyer.

Work & Satisfaction

Manager C has been working within the Regione Calabria for several years, albeit in different sectors.

She manages a team of 6 people, with whom he claims to have an excellent personal and professional relationship.

He does not carry out any other activity outside the Regione Calabria, although she has managed a personal law firm in previous year. She has not changed residence, but it takes a long time to get to workplace.

Manager C is satisfied with her job and the role covered, being very demanding and stimulating, even if it requires a lot of commitment and longer working hours than those formally foreseen.

Personal gratification also comes from the human relationships established within the team, as she has contributed to the realization and productivity of some of her employees.

The physical environment of the office is adequate to perform her tasks. In this regard, as we will see later, it is more appropriate than the domestic environment due to the specificity of the job.

The main aspect to improve is the overall organization of the organization. By delegating the internal organization of the various sectors to individual managers, different organizational configurations emerge. This misalignment, in most cases, reduces the effectiveness and efficiency of the work done by the different organizational units when they must collaborate. In addition, he believes that more support and cooperation from the head of the department would be desirable.

Smart working

Manager C positively evaluates the smart working experience.

In the initial phase of introduction, the manager and his team obtained the main support from the "Digital Agenda", self-training activities and meetings with experts appointed by the organization. However, these preparation methods were not effective. For example, the management of information systems required a high

preparation, since it was no longer carried out vertically by a single person as in office work, but it was assigned to each individual worker. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic she used flexible working methods, but never so structured; as a result, she has perceived important change compared to the past.

After the introduction phase, the tools made available by the organization were suited to working from home, even if collection and management of documents and data was difficult.

Although smart working has become easier over time, as they had acquired a working method, the awareness that it was a transitory tool was source of relief.

Smart working & Commitment

Interviewee argues that working from home is more challenging in some respects but less demanding in others. Working in a more peaceful and serene environment, without distractions and unexpected events, allows to work better. Moreover, autonomously organizing the worked days has a positive impact on work-life balance, as it allows to have more time for other activities.

However, as previously mentioned, the coordination with other organizational units and the employee involvement increased the manager's work commitment. Furthermore, in the first phase of the pandemic, in which "Distance Learning" was not yet structured, the presence of children at home led to greater commitment and longer working days.

Smart working & Organization

The main difficulty was the involvement of employees, as smart working is an "emotionally delicate" tool, in which it is necessary to continually reassure employees. In fact, one of the employees failed to be as productive as before, with quite significant psychological consequences. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, smart working has worsened the coordination with the other organizational units. Monitoring and control were not a problem, especially thanks to the positive relationships between managers and employees.

Overall, smart working has had no impact on performance.

Working from home allows to do job more effectively, but the difficulty in engaging employees and in implementing smart working effectively eliminated the positive effects on performance. Furthermore, since their productivity did not increase in proportion to the effort, this led to a negative feeling of the relationship between effort and results.

Smart working & Future

In this phase of slow return to normal, returning to the office was not a problem for safety and health.

Manager C hopes that a mixed working method will be adopted, in which at least 1/3 of the activities, especially the administrative ones, are done in smart working. The alternation between work from home and office work is essential for discussion and coordination activities, as these are more effective if carried out in person.

Smart working is an excellent development opportunity for the public administration, especially since the preparation and the introduction phase, considered the most difficult for such a complex tool, has been largely overcome. He also believes that smart working can attract better workers, who generally seek more flexibility.

Manager C points out that in this moment, smart working is adopted sporadically and unevenly within the organization, increasing employee dissatisfaction. Consequently, to use this tool in the future, structured and standard guidelines are needed for all, as was the case during the first phase of the pandemic.

4.3.2 Employee C

Employee C works within the administrative function of the "Youth and Female Entrepreneurship" sector. She is 37 years old and married. Both are workers. They have a son, but she is not particularly involved in household and care activities. He holds a bachelor's and master's degrees.

Work & Satisfaction

Employee C has been in the Regione Calabria for about two years.
She claims to have a good relationship with colleagues and manager, who helped her to integrate quickly in the new working environment. It does not carry out any other activity outside the organization.

She is very satisfied with her work, as it is consistent with her studies and with her personal ambition. It is very stimulating not only for the activities he carries out, but also for the interaction and comparison with competent colleagues and "customers", since it promotes personal and professional growth. Moreover, working in a high social impact sector guarantees a higher gratification.
In addition to the technical aspects of her job, she particularly appreciates working close to her home, as it allows to be close to the family.

Smart working

Smart working experience was neither positive nor negative.
He claims that this tool was absolutely unthinkable prior to its introduction due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and this unpredictability has resulted in an ambiguous perception during its use.

Working from home allows to independently manage the working day and to carry out the activities more peacefully, as there is no direct supervision from the manager. However, she did not perceive greater satisfaction, since smart working eliminates the pleasure of working closely with colleagues and the feeling of approval when dealing with the manager. Furthermore, the lack of contact and discussion with colleagues and superiors reduces personal and professional growth.

Smart working & Commitment

Employee C believes that working from home is more challenging in some respects but less demanding in others. As mentioned above, organizing the working time independently and working without direct supervision allows to carry out the activities with greater serenity. Moreover, it has often allowed to obtain free time to devote to extra-work activities. However, some tasks require more effort than similar situations in the office. Consequently, the impact on work-life balance is also ambiguous. If working from home allows to gain more time to devote to other activities, it also increases the commitment during the carrying out of one's work activities and reduces gratifications and recognition, with a negative impact on motivation.

Smart working & Organization

From an organizational point of view, smart working reduces the effectiveness of the supervision and control of employees, as manger are unable to verify their daily commitment. Consequently, even performance evaluation systems are not as adequate as face-to-face evaluation.
Especially in the first phase of adoption, it experienced a deterioration in the organization and coordination of the resources.

Given the ambiguity of all these elements, smart working has no impact on performance.
While ensuring greater well-being due to the autonomous management of working hours, the lack of contact and discussion with colleagues and superiors reduces the motivation of workers, and consequently their productivity. Furthermore, the perception of not being assessed correctly reduces employee engagement.

Smart working & Future

In this phase of returning to normal, work in the office aroused insecurity and fear for her health. However, she believes that it was no longer possible to exclusively adopt smart working.

To overcome the difficulties perceived during the smart working period, a mixed method is the best solution for the future. Furthermore, offering workers the possibility of using smart working could allow the organization to attract excellent public employee who currently live or work in distant places.

Smart working could be a useful tool for the Regione Calabria to accelerate the digitization process and to align it with the best performing public organizations. For this to happen, however, there must be a national will.

4.3.3 To Summarize

The main points discussed with the manager and employees are shown in Table 6 on the next page.

Table 6 – Main Topics in Organizational Unit C

Topics	Manager B	Employee B
Individual Characteristics	• 42 years old, married, two children • Dual Earner Couple • Household activities	• 37 years old, married, one child • Dual Earner Couple • No Household activities
Work & Satisfaction	• Team: 6 internal resources • Commuting • Very Satisfied, but Demanding • Positive Relationships • No Low Digitalization • Organizational Problems • No Organizational Support and Cooperation	• Administrative • No Commuting • Satisfied, Motivated, Involved • Very Positive Relationships
Smart working	• Positive Perception • Introduction Problems • Previous Experiences, but less structure • Efficiency, Autonomy • Relief as smart working was transitory	• No Perception • Autonomy, Efficiency, but No more Satisfaction • Lack of Relationships • No Confrontation & Approval • No Personal and Professional Growth
SW & Commitment	• Ambiguous Longer and Demanding • Free Time • Work-Life Balance • Household Activities Problems	• Ambiguous Longer and Demanding • Free Time • No Work-Life Balance • Ambiguous Well-being
SW & Organization	• No Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Inadequate • Less Employee Involvement • No Impact on Coordination • Less External Coordination • No Impact on Performance • Attract Better Workers	• Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Inadequate • No Recognized Commitment • Less Coordination • No Impact on Performance • Attract Better Workers
Future	• Alternation • Discussion & Coordination in office	8 Alternation 9 Digitalization

5. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The following section contains the analysis of the information collected during the interviews with managers and employees of the Regione Calabria. It is a comparative analysis between the data collected through the interviews and the results obtained from previous research identified in the literature review. Moreover, a comparison is also made between the information obtained from employees and managers to verify whether the role covered can influence the perception of workers, and between the different organizational units, to verify if same smart working methods can lead to different perceptions across different units of the same organization.

For a clearer and more consistent representation, the analysis is presented following a similar structure to that in the previous sections. Furthermore, for a better view of the empirical findings, the following table contains all the main information collected during the interviews.

Table 7 – Empirical Findings

Organizational Unit A

Topics	Manager A	Employee A
Individual Characteristics	• 43 years old, married, two children • Dual Earner Couple • Household activities	• 58 years old, married, 2 children with different residence • Dual Earner Couple • No Household activities
Work & Satisfaction	• Dual role • Team: 8 internal resources • No Commuting • Satisfied • Lack of Human resources	• Administrative • No Commuting • Positive Relationships • Low Digitalization • Lack of Human resources
Smart working	• Positive Perception • More Efficiency, Autonomy, Responsibility • Ambiguous Employees Engagement • Difficulties for older employees • Low Digitalization of PA	• Very Positive Perception • Previous Experiences • Efficiency, Autonomy • Ambiguous Employees Engagement • Low Digitalization of PA • In Office whenever he could
SW & Commitment	• Longer and Demanding • No Free Time • No Greater Well-being	• Longer and Demanding • Free Time • Work-Life balance • No Greater Well-being
SW & Organization	• Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Inadequate • Ambiguous Employee Engagement • Less External Coordination • Positive Impact on Performance	• Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Inadequate • Ambiguous Employee Engagement • No Impact on Coordination • No Impact on Performance
Future	• Alternation • Introduce Managerial Figures • Only for Administrative	• Alternation • Suitable Jobs and Workers

Organizational Unit B

Topics	Manager B	Employee B
Individual Characteristics	• 47 years old, married, one child • Dual Earner Couple • No Household activities	• 56 years old, married, 2 children with different residence • Dual Earner Couple • No Household activities
Work & Satisfaction	• Team: 3 internal resources and 6 external consultants • Commuting, but often Travel for work or Telework • Very Satisfied • Low Digitalization • Lack of Human resources • No Organizational Trust	• Technician • Commuting, but often Travel for work or Telework • Satisfied, Motivated, Involved • Work Stimulating and Rewarding, despite Demanding • Low Digitalization • Lack of Human resources
Smart working	• Very Positive Perception • No differences with Previous Experiences • Autonomy, Responsibility, Satisfaction, Productivity • Ambiguous Employees Engagement • Data issues • Social & Environment	• Positive Perception • Previous Experiences • Efficiency, Autonomy • Data issues
SW & Commitment	• No Longer and Demanding • Free Time • Greater Well-being	• No Longer and Demanding • Free Time • Work-Life balance • Greater Well-being
SW & Organization	• Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Inadequate • Ambiguous Employee Engagement • No Impact on Coordination • Less External Coordination • Positive Impact on Performance, only for Suitable Workers	• No Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Inadequate • No Recognized Commitment by External Managers • No Impact on Coordination • No Less External Coordination • No Impact on Performance
Future	• Only Suitable Workers • Internal Platform • Evaluation Systems • Trust	• No Only Suitable Workers • Internal Platform • In Office only for Relationships

Organizational Unit C

Topics	Manager A	Employee A
Individual Characteristics	• 43 years old, married, two children • Dual Earner Couple • Household activities	• 58 years old, married, 2 children with different residence • Dual Earner Couple • No Household activities
Work & Satisfaction	• Dual role • Team: 8 internal resources • No Commuting • Satisfied • Lack of Human resources	• Administrative • No Commuting • Positive Relationships • Low Digitalization • Lack of Human resources
Smart working	• Positive Perception • More Efficiency, Autonomy, Responsibility • Ambiguous Employees Engagement • Difficulties for older employees • Low Digitalization of PA	• Very Positive Perception • Previous Experiences • Efficiency, Autonomy • Ambiguous Employees Engagement • Low Digitalization of PA • In Office whenever he could
SW & Commitment	• Longer and Demanding • No Free Time • No Greater Well-being	• Longer and Demanding • Free Time • Work-Life balance • No Greater Well-being
SW & Organization	• Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Inadequate • Ambiguous Employee Engagement • Less External Coordination • Positive Impact on Performance	• Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Inadequate • Ambiguous Employee Engagement • No Impact on Coordination • No Impact on Performance
Future	• Alternation • Introduce Managerial Figures • Only for Administrative	• Alternation • Suitable Jobs and Workers

5.1   Individual Characteristics

The individual characteristics determine the need for and the use of flexible working methods among the employees, also affecting their perception during the adoption.

As predicted by Goni-Legaz & Ollo Lópe (2014), to investigate on the need for a more balanced life to take on household and parental responsibilities, since it is no longer only women who prioritize domestic care [Kawaguchi, 2007], today is more appropriate to shift the focus from gender to family structure, considering the couple's working situation and the presence or not of children. In fact, analyzing data collected during the interviews, there is not a direct correlation between interviewees' gender and their needs or desire to use smart working for domestic and care activities. Rather, respondents with children or in dual earner couples are more likely to appreciate smart working [Knudsen & Waerness, 2009] due to higher work-family responsibilities. However, although these results are consistent with previous literature, it should be highlighted that all the interviewees with young children argue that home and care activities could, in some cases, reduce the willingness to adopt smart working, as these activities involve greater commitment and more distractions during working hours.

In term of age, there is no evidence that older people tend to appreciate flexible working methods less due to their involvement in a "traditional relationship", with fewer work-family conflict [Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Hill et al., 2012]. Rather, older workers need less FWAs because their children require less care and attention, as for Employee A and Employee B.

Compared to what Sweet et al. (2016) claim, older managers are not less likely to implement FWAs than younger managers. However, interviewees found that older workers had more difficulties during the initial phase of introduction of the smart working and took longer to acquire a working method than younger workers. Moreover, youngest interviewees (Manager C and Employee C) have a more balanced approach to work than older [Deal, 2007], also arguing that smart working is a tool for attracting better workers [Shepard III et al.,1996; Kelly et al., 2008] and improve the Public Administration.

Regarding the distance between home and office, all respondents, even those who do not take long to reach the workplace, say that smart working is one of the best tools to reduce or eliminate commuting.

5.2   Job Characteristics

All interviewees, except for Employee B, argue that an effective smart working adoption depends on the type of job and work activities involved [Christensen & Staines, 1990]. According to our interviewees, it

is more suitable for management and administrative workers, whose activities require manipulation, interpretation, or communication of data. However, Manager A claims that FWAs are not useful for the managers because remote working eliminates the human side of their work, such as empathy or emotional intelligence.

Jobs that require coordination and collaboration with other organizational units may not be suitable to adopt smart working [Beauregard et al., 2019]. In fact, more than half of the interviewees argue that smart working reduces coordination with workers and teams of other organizational units or outside the organization.

For managers, the size of the team does not seem to affect their perception on smart working. Although operating in team of different sizes, all the managers did not face particular issues during the smart working adoption and, indeed, Manager A and Manager B would have appreciated more internal resources. However, Manager A argue that smart working amplifies the lack of human resources.

For all these reasons, all respondents agree on the need of correctly identify suitable jobs for flexible working arrangements [Turetken et al., 2011; Beauregard et al., 2019].

5.3 Satisfaction & Commitment

All interviewees, both managers and employees, consider the smart working experience positively. Working from home allowed them to work more effectively and serenely, increasing overall satisfaction in carrying out their tasks. Smart working increases the control over their life, offering the opportunity to work during times more suitable to their personal needs [McNall et al., 2010]. This greater autonomy enhances satisfaction and motivation and, consequently, a greater physiological commitment [Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002]. Most of the respondents, except for Manager B and Employee B, faced longer and more demanding working days, even without additional payment or remuneration [e.g., Michelson, 2000; Duxbury & Higgins, 2002; Peters, Wetzels, & Tijdens, 2008]. Even if smart working meant more free time for other activities only for Employee A, the greater autonomy perceived had improved the physical and mental well-being of all the interviewees.

One element that may have affected workers satisfaction and engagement is their previous experiences with flexible working methods. Although those who have had previous experience did not perceive differences with the adoption of smart working, those who used these tools in a more structural way, such Manager B and Employee B, perceived fewer administrative barriers and recognized greater benefits, reporting higher levels of satisfaction and commitment [Wickramasinghe & Jayabandu, 2007].

The relationship between smart working and workers satisfaction and commitment, as highlighted by previous research, needs further investigation. Fox example, it was not possible to establish if the commitment of workers who used smart working was the same as those who previously have the option of FWAs but did not use them [e.g., Chen & Fulment, 2017; Curzi et al., 2020], since the monitoring and evaluation systems were not useful, according to five out of six respondents.

Managers and employees of organizational units A and B argue that the positive effects on satisfaction and commitment do not occur when smart working is adopted by employees not motivated or unable to organize their work effectively, as these show less commitment and less productivity, confirming the theory of Blair-Loy & Wharton (2004). Consequently, management must identify and select the right workers to adopt this tool in the future [Bentley et al., 2013].

FWAs can increase the perception of potential career penalties or not recognized and appreciated commitment [Hammer et al., 2005; Leslie et al., 2012]. In fact, since the monitoring and evaluation systems were inadequate for most of the interviewees, two out of three employees perceived less recognition of their commitment, and this had negative effects on their satisfaction and motivation, especially for Employee C. Moreover, due to the lack of face-to-face interaction, workers could face a disruption not only from an operational level, but also from an individual point of view, in terms of social relations and recognition [Zhang, 2016]. Except for Employee A and Manager B, all the respondents perceived a worsening of relationships, both inside and outside their organizational unit.

It is interesting to note that all the interviewees positively evaluate the smart working experience, despite this tool being adopted suddenly, obligatorily and with homogeneous methods within the entire organization. These considerations are in stark contrast to several previous studies, according to which flexible working methods can be adopted effectively only if implemented within an employee-centered strategy, considering their needs and characteristics [e.g., Lee & DeVoe, 2012; Tripi & Mattei, 2020; Grawitch et al., 2009]. Nevertheless, for all the respondents smart working has lasted too long, and, for its future adoption, it is necessary to alternate remote working with working in office. In this regard, only Manager B and Employee B do not argue that the presence in the office, albeit sporadic, is "physiological" to carry out the work effectively and, indeed, they argue that workers should go to the office only for strictly necessary reasons.

Finally, it is interesting to note that, overall, employees have a less clear and defined view on the topics discussed during the interviews than managers.

5.4 Work-Life balance

Smart working can involve greater social and professional isolation [Charalampous et al., 2019], as mainly stated by Manager C and Employee C, and can also force adopters to extend working hours and effort

[Omondo et al., 2018; Knauth, 2007], as stated by all the respondents except for Manager B and Employee According to all the interviewees except Employee A, even if smart working did not involve more free time for other activities, the increased autonomy affect the physical and mental well-being, as workers could improve their health and safety [Tavares, 2017; Wayne et al., 2006; Grzywacz et al., 2008].

For workers in Organizational Units B and C, smart working facilitates family duties and the overall organization of domestic responsibilities [Allen, 2001; Ammons & Markham, 2004; Crosbie & Moore, 2004; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Hill et al., 2003].

All the respondents appreciate smart working more for the effects on their autonomy and private life than those on work. Thus, on such basis, work–family benefits are more important predictors than any other positive effect or perceived barriers [Albion, 2004].

5.5   Organization & Performance

From an organizational point of view, the first element to consider is the management support. This is an important influencer in the adoption of smart working because, if they perceive fewer barriers and more benefits, employees are more likely to commit to adopting this method [Pérez et al., 2002]. Not by chance, both manager and employee of all the organizational units considered positively evaluate smart working. Furthermore, it is possible to note that the manager and the employee often share same opinions on the individual positive and negative aspects of the smart working experience. This similarity could be due to the positive human and working relationships that determine trust between manager and employee, with repercussions on the levels of satisfaction, commitment, and, consequently, approval of smart working [Krot & Lewicka, 2011; Stout et al., 2013; Wijewardena et al. 2014].

From an operational point of view, smart working implementation raises new administrative barriers, such as control, coordination, and performance evaluation issues [Scandura & Lankau, 1997; Lawrence & Corwin, 2003; Charron & Lowe, 2005]. In fact, except for Manager A, both managers and employees believe that the control and evaluation systems have been inadequate, both to assess commitment and to identify misuse. In some cases, this lack of control has affected workers engagement and motivation. Moreover, as claimed by most of the interviewees, smart working reduced employee involvement. Only Manager B and Employee B, probably due to the previous structured use of flexible working practices or to the smaller size of the team, argue that smart working improves workers involvement, as it makes communication and coordination more effective. However, communication and coordination with external units was problematic for more than half of the interviewees, since smart working reduces coordination with workers and team of other organizational units or external institution [Beauregard et al., 2019].
Smart working implementations also raises equity problems, as flexible working method cannot be available

for all employees [Charron & Lowe, 2005]. In fact, Manager C points out that in this period, in which smart working is adopted sporadically and unevenly within the organization, the dissatisfaction of employees who do not use it has increased.

All these aspects, in some way, affect the overall performance of workers and the organization. As in previous research, the analysis report mixed findings or no direct association on the impact of smart working on performance.

Although some workers can misuse this tool due to less control [Downes, & Koekemoer, 2011], autonomy have increased employee satisfaction and motivation and, consequently, the performance on the job for all the interviewees, as predicted by the job characteristic model [Hackman & Oldham, 1975]. Moreover, the positive impact on their productivity results from a better cooperation between them [Shepard III et al.,1996; Kelly et al., 2008].

However, due to the negative effects discussed above, the findinds are completely conflicting: Manager A, Employee A and Manager B argue that smart working has an overall positive impact on performance, while the other interviewees argue that it has no impact. This is in contrast, as said before, with Lee & Devoe's (2012) research findings, according to which FWAs increase productivity only when implemented within an employee-centered strategy, and not for external influence or with mandatory and standardized adoption.

In any case, all the interviewees agree that smart working certainly did not have negative effects on performance.

To maintain or boost performance, it is crucial to modify organizational methods and practices, providing more transparent and concrete performance evaluations systems [Flynn, 1995; Baruch, 2000; Greenberg et al., 2004]. All the respondents argue that the organization should move away from a "process-oriented" culture to a "results-oriented" culture [Wijewardena et al. 2014], with performance evaluation systems that include more specific objectives, shifting from the working hours to the achieved results.

In addition, Manager A argues that it is necessary to introduce managerial figures who deal exclusively with the management and the coordination of all the activities carried out from home, while Manager C and Employee C would like the evaluation and the coordination to be carried out weekly in presence to improve the evaluation and avoid that their commitment is not recognized.

5.6   Environment

As found in the literature review, the positive effect of smart working on environment, mobility and socioeconomic aspect remains poorly understood and little considered [Glaister, 2008]. Although all the interviewees recognize the positive impact on social aspects, only Manager B emphasized this topic as a main positive effect of a structured use of smart working.

5.7   Main Findings

To answer the main research question, namely whether *same smart working adoption can lead to different perceptions across different units of the same organization*, the main findings are extrapolated from the previous analysis. The following analysis also includes considerations on the previously reported theory, as these theoretical findings evaluate the adoption of *different* working methods among the different units.

Considering the individual characteristics of the interviewees, and in particular the age, the analysis seems to show that the organizational units with younger workers (Organizational Unit C) considered smart working an excellent tool for attracting better workers, probably due to their more balanced approach to work and greater familiarity with technological tools than older workers.

All the interviewees agree on the need of correctly identify suitable jobs for flexible working arrangements. Consequently, on such basis, same smart working adoption do not affect the perception that this tool is not suitable for all workers.

The smart working adoption, even when implemented with same methods, improves the well-being of workers, despite they face longer and more demanding working days. However, workers in organizational units who have previously used structural flexible working methods, such as the Organizational Unit B, do not perceive a greater effort and more working hours. As expected, when same smart working is adopted with same methods in different organizational units, those who are more familiar with this tool perceive less issues. In fact, the workers of Organizational Unit B perceived fewer administrative barriers and recognized greater benefits, reporting higher levels of satisfaction and commitment. Furthermore, they are the only interviewees who, unlike the workers of the other organizational units, have perceived an improvement in the coordination and communication systems and, above all, they are the only ones who would not want to alternate work from home with work in office.

Same smart working adoption does not influence the autonomy perceived. In fact, all the interviewees argue that this tool offers the opportunity to work during times more suitable to their personal needs, and this greater autonomy enhances satisfaction, motivation and, consequently, a greater physiological commitment. However, according to employees who have not previously adopted structural flexible working methods, this commitment is not adequately recognized. Once again, previous experiences seem to have a key role.

As in the cases identified in the literature, who have studied situations in which different flexible working methods are adopted according to the specific characteristics of the context in which they are introduced,

even adopting same smart working methods, the perceived impact on performance is ambiguous. However, all respondents from different organizational units argue that smart working did not have negative effects on performance. The performance evaluation systems were found to be inadequate in all the organizational units considered. On such basis, when same methods are adopted across the organization, the most consistent problems are perceived within all the organizational units regardless of their characteristics.

When smart working is adopted in the same way, it seems that positive relationships can influence social perceptions more. Although many respondents perceived a worsening of relationships, the workers of Organizational Unit C highlighted more problems, arguing that smart working not only reduces relationships between colleagues, but also eliminates social and professional recognition.

6.   CONCLUSIONS

This final section presents the research findings and recommendations for its future use.
First, taking up the analysis of the empirical results together with the previous literature, the answers to the topics covered during the interviews and to the main research question are presented. After providing the main findings on the topic of this research, the implications for its use and suggestions for future research are presented. Furthermore, to provide as complete a picture as possible, the limitations of the research are also highlighted.

6.1   Research Summary

To provide a clear understanding of the findings, the highlights of the research are briefly summarized. As pointed out in the research purpose (paragraph 1.2), the main objective of this study is to understand if same smart working adoption can lead to different perceptions across different, in the case of the Regione Calabria. To do this, the author started from an analysis of the existing literature to deepen the concepts related to flexible working methods, smart working, enablers factors and potential outcomes (Chapter 2).
A holistic approach with multiple case studies was used, gathering the information necessary to answer the main research question through open-ended interviews with managers and employees of 3 different organizational units. Information was collected on the individual characteristics of the interviewees, such as age, gender, family structure, and on their perception on topics covered by the research, such as job characteristics, satisfaction, work-life balance, and organizational performance. The information obtained was then analyzed by making a comparison with the previous findings, also considering the perceptions of

employees and managers to have a complete picture of the organizational units in question. Finally, to answer the main research question, a comparison was made between the overall data of the various organizational units.

Considering the limitations presented below, according to the interviewees and from the analysis of the results it is possible to answer the research question through the following main points:

- Organizational units with younger workers considered the smart working a tool to attract talent

- All the organizational units must to identify suitable jobs and workers

- Smart working improves well-being, despite longer and more demanding working days

- Previous experiences greatly improve the positive perception

- Same smart working adoption reduce coordination, communication, and evaluation systems

- Workers perceive more autonomy and responsibility also with same smart working adoption

- Without previous experiences, the commitment of workers is not adequately recognized

- Even with same smart working adoption, the impact on performance is ambiguous

- Organizational units with positive relationship perceive more social problems

To justify the answer to the main research question and explain the overall perceptions on the organizational units studied, it is necessary to consider the comparative analysis carried out in the previous section.

6.2 Implications

First, this research is intended to be a tool to better understand the concept of smart working and its enablers and outcomes, especially in the Public Administration.

Secondly, Considering the analysis carried out, managers could use the information base on case to better implement smart working, exploiting the nature of research ("same adoption of smart working") to understand which aspects of this tool can be standardized within the organization and which ones are not.

Employees often decide not to use these methods, as evidenced by previous research. Consequently, this study can be a useful tool to ensure a greater understanding on the effects that smart working can have on their professional and private lives.

From a literary point of view, this study reveals some discrepancies between the theoretical findings and the empirical findings. The research not only seeks to fill this gap, but also highlights new aspects that require further investigation, since the search field is quite recent.

6.3 Limitations

The first limitation of this research is the sample size. The research discusses the information obtained from 6 interviews with managers and employees from different departments of Regione Calabria. The analysis of a greater number of workers or the comparison with more case studies would allow to obtain more information and, consequently, more consistent results. The high reorganization that the PA is facing, in addition to the Covid pandemic, has increased the difficulty to meet managers and employees of the Regione Calabria. Furthermore, those who gave their availability were forced to postpone interviews due to sudden commitments, thus reducing research time.

The second limitation is the research method used. The case study, to strengthen its validity, requires the collection of other evidence in addition to interviews, such as internal documents or company reports. As it is a new phenomenon, we have no previous internal reports or documents. Consequently, the research is limited to a comparison between empirical findings and existing literature.

The third limitation arises from the above problem. Since most of the interviewees have not previously adopted smart working, it is not possible to define whether their perception would have been the same if they had adopted different method defined according on their needs and characteristics. Again, we can only make a comparison with the literature.

6.4 Future Research

As for future research, there are several interesting topics that could be studied. Firstly, it would be interesting to repeat the research later, when workers have returned to normal, to verify whether their perceptions on positive and negative aspects are the same or have been influenced by too long use of smart working. On this aspect, it would also be interesting to note whether the current considerations on the future adoption of smart working (for example, most of the interviewees argue that an alternation between work from home and work in the office is necessary) would be respected or present differences.

Given the results obtained from the study, future research could carry out the research considering organizational units that have structurally adopted flexible working methods before the Covid-19 pandemic, to verify whether previous experiences predict workers' perceptions.

Furthermore, comparing more units of analysis would allow for a more extensive comparison, verifying to what extent the perception of workers is influenced by the organizational context in which they operate.

Finally, it would be interesting to carry out research in an organization that has adopted the same smart working methods not for normative obligations, but within a well-defined strategic plan. In this way, it would be possible to make a comparison between the two different situations and verify if some aspects of smart working can be standardized.

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Thesis Summary

- ## Introduction

In an age of great instability and changes, companies and public organizations are pursuing innovations to solve unprecedented challenges. To face this uncertainty, organizations are changing their processes to become more flexible and responsive by introducing new tools to manage internal resources, including Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs). FWAs are employment practices that allow workers flexibility in how they perform their tasks, mostly in flexible working hours and flexible workplace [Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013].

Although this phenomenon peaked during the Covid-19 pandemic, when almost all organizations in the world asked their employees to start working from home or "smart working" (SW) [Brynjolfsson et al., 2020; Gottlieb et al., 2020], the FWAs was topic of great interest for academic and practitioners even before the health crisis. The interest in FWAs stems from early research findings, according to which flexibility is often a strategic factor to firms' competitive success due to its direct effect on productivity, profitability, and global firm performance [Bal & De Lange, 2014; Zeijen, Peeters, & Hakanen, 2018]. However, research on the impact of flexible working arrangements reports mixed results.

Beyond the potential benefits of the flexible working practices, organizations and managers have often rejected these methods until the pandemic because they are unprepared and fearful of the big change.

Even when organizations offer these methods, a considerable number of employees often elect not to use these methods, despite the widespread availability of FWAs and their potential benefits [Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006; Caillier, 2013; Kwon & Jeon 2018]. Noting this discrepancy, many research has focused on which organizational factors, such as inconsistent supervisors support, organizational culture, and reward systems [e.g., Allen, 2001; Galinsky, Bond, & Hill, 2004; Thomas & Ganster, 1995], and which individual factors, such as gender, age, family responsibility and education [e.g., Billings & Sharpe, 1999; Sharpe, Hermsen, & Billings, 2002], enable or prevent the adoption of flexible working policies.

While FWAs has been researched for decades, it has been investigated from a voluntary adoption perspective. The literature has focused attention on the perceived availability and accessibility of these practices [Budd and Mumford, 2006] when organizations proposed them to be more flexible and competitive, leaving employees the choice to join or not according to their preferences. Due to the Covid pandemic, however, FWAs were not introduced for a well-defined strategic plan, but organizations and employees were forced to use them for the

health emergency, beyond their will and without any preparation. In this situation, many organizations have introduced the same flexible working methods, and in particular smart working, within the entire organization or in a large part of it without adapting them to the peculiarities of each business units. As a result, we have few research and information on employee perception and satisfaction when flexible work arrangements are mandatory and, more importantly, on what factors affect them when same methods are introduced within different units of the same organization [Tripi & Mattei, 2020; Ferodova et al., 2020; Bolisani et al., 2020].

Consequently, the objective of this research is to contribute to the knowledge regarding flexible working methods adopted suddenly and uniformly in the whole organization, without preparation and adaptation to the specific needs. In particular, the main goal is to verify if the same smartworking adoption can lead to different perceptions and satisfaction across different units of the same organization. Furthermore, the aim is to clarify whether these perceptions differ according to the position held, comparing managers and employees' opinion. Knowledge regarding the perception on smart working can help to identify what opportunities it offers for the future and how to exploit them because, having been used for a long period of time in most organizations worldwide, it could become an entrenched working modality. Starting from the main goal, the research question is defined as follows:

"Can the same smartworking adoption lead to different perceptions across different units? The case of Regione Calabria"

• **Methodology**

The goal of the research is not only to test generally accepted theories in this field, but also to consider existing theory to explore new areas of research, analyzing the information provided by the selected population.

As the research investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context. and this phenomenon is complex, unusual, ambiguous, and context-dependent, the most suitable method to conduct this research is the case study. The research is exploratory with multiple case study and aim to analyze the existing theory and the new results on the relationship between smart working and workers' perceptions through the acquisition of new knowledge and the review of literature and topics previously examined [Saunders & Lewis, 2012], as these studies are still inconclusive and limited. It is a holistic case study, as multiple cases (organizational units) are considered on a single unit of analysis (Regione Calabria). It is necessary to underline that the analysis does not focus only on the different cases, but it is also conducted within the individual cases, collecting information on two levels: managers and employees. The qualitative research of these primary data was carried out through open-ended interviews submitted with the identified population, and this data were then processed and combined with secondary data obtained from an in-depth analysis of the previous literature.

Starting from the research context defined within the primary research question, different topics are researched and discussed within the Regione Calabria. These topics are listed below with their purpose:

- **Individual Characteristics**

  The purpose of this topic is to understand if individual characteristics can influence the perception of managers and employees on smart working. The research includes and evaluates the factors identified in the previous literature, also trying to provide further useful information.

- **Job characteristics & Satisfaction**

  The second topic aim to understand whether specific work factors and job satisfaction can positively or negatively influence workers' perception on smart working. Moreover, considering the important implications and changes driven by a structural adoption of smart working, it was asked if they previously adopted flexible working methods to understand if previous experience may influence their current perception. As for the manager, the research also focuses on the number of people managed, to understand if the size of the team can influence the perception of managers.

- **Advantages & Disadvantages**

  In this case, the research seeks to understand what employees and managers think about smart working and how they evaluate its adoption in recent months, focusing on the perceived benefits and difficulties, the impact on their satisfaction and workload, the effects on their private life and on work-life balance. By asking the same question to both, it is possible to understand if benefits and issues perceived are the same.

- **Organization**

  The goal of this point is to understand if employees consider smart working an optimal working method for the organization in terms of coordination, control, evaluation, commitment, relationship, and impact on performance. By asking the same question to both managers and employees, individual perceived benefits and difficulties can be compared. In addition, managers are asked what advantages and difficulties they have observed for employees.

- **Future**

  The final topic highlight whether employees and managers would like to adopt smart working in the future or prefer the traditional working methods. By asking the same questions, the research verify whether the managers' willingness to adopt smart working is the same or differ from that of employees. Moreover, it verifies if managers would like employees will adopt smart working in the future.

For the completeness of the study, both primary and secondary data were analyzed.

The primary data, which play a central role in the research, contain the information collected during meetings with managers and employees of the various organizational units considered in the case of Regione Calabria. Given the exploratory nature of the study, a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions on specific topics was used as a research tool. This allowed to submit the main questions, which represent the key points of the research, and to include further questions on the topics emerged during the interview, guaranteeing a certain degree of flexibility and autonomy within the conversations. In this way, it was possible to deepen some themes or explore others, leaving the interviewees free to express their idea and opinion on the topic without affecting their feelings and responses [Saunders & Lewis, 2012]. Furthermore, given the double level of analysis with employees and managers, the semi-structured approach made it possible to adapt some questions to the type of interviewee, to his specific characteristics, to the peculiarities of his job and organizational unit.

The secondary data are collected from the literature with a narrative review, as a systematic method would not have been suitable for this research. These theoretical findings increase the awareness on the topics previously studied and on those contained within the research. To provide a clear and complete theoretical framework on the topics of this research, the literature review first consists of a general introduction of flexible working methods, then focused on smart working in Italy and in relation to the Covid-19 emergency. After having limited the research field, the conditions for adopting flexible working methods and their impact were considered.

The data was processed with different approach.

The first strategy adopted is the "Configuration comparison", in which the empirical information gathered during the analysis (empirical configuration) are compared with the theory identified in the previous literature (theoretical configuration) [Trochim, 1989]. Moreover, the "Thematic analysis" was also used, since the empirical information gathered through the interviews was examined and divided into main topics, through wich it was possible to define the final analysis [Braun & Clarke, 2006]. To strengthen these main strategies, the integrated analysis units, i.e. the smaller units within a case study [Yin, 2005], were also considered. In fact, within each case study (Organizational unit A, Organizational unit B, Organizational unit C), information on both employees and managers was collected to obtain a better understanding of the case as whole.

Previous information and personal feelings were not considered at any stage of the research. Rather, the considerations and sensations were used exclusively during the interviews, to direct the answers towards the topics of greater interest, and during the analysis of the sub-research questions, to give a unitary meaning to the information collected and answer to the main research question.

Since a research design is supposed to represent a logical set of statement, four test are commonly used to establish the quality of an empirical research: construct validity, internal validity, external validity, reliability:

- For the internal validity of the research, the logic of patter-matching was used
- To increase construct validity in a case study, a chain of evidence was established
- Chain of evidence was also used for the reliability
- For external validity, the results can be generalized

• **Findings**

The information collected during the interviews with managers and employees of the Regione Calabria are summarized in the following table.

Organizational Unit A

Topics	Manager A	Employee A
Individual Characteristics	• 43 years old, married, two children • Dual Earner Couple • Household activities	• 58 years old, married, 2 children with different residence • Dual Earner Couple • No Household activities
Work & Satisfaction	• Dual role • Team: 8 internal resources • No Commuting • Satisfied • Lack of Human resources	• Administrative • No Commuting • Positive Relationships • Low Digitalization • Lack of Human resources
Smart working	• Positive Perception • More Efficiency, Autonomy, Responsibility • Ambiguous Employees Engagement • Difficulties for older employees • Low Digitalization of PA	• Very Positive Perception • Previous Experiences • Efficiency, Autonomy • Ambiguous Employees Engagement • Low Digitalization of PA • In Office whenever he could
SW & Commitment	• Longer and Demanding • No Free Time • No Greater Well-being	• Longer and Demanding • Free Time • Work-Life balance • No Greater Well-being
SW & Organization	• Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Inadequate • Ambiguous Employee Engagement • Less External Coordination • Positive Impact on Performance	• Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Inadequate • Ambiguous Employee Engagement • No Impact on Coordination • No Impact on Performance
Future	• Alternation • Introduce Managerial Figures • Only for Administrative	• Alternation • Suitable Jobs and Workers

Organizational Unit B

Topics	Manager B	Employee B
Individual Characteristics	• 47 years old, married, one child • Dual Earner Couple • No Household activities	• 56 years old, married, 2 children with different residence • Dual Earner Couple • No Household activities
Work & Satisfaction	• Team: 3 internal resources and 6 external consultants • Commuting, but often Travel for work or Telework • Very Satisfied • Low Digitalization • Lack of Human resources • No Organizational Trust	• Technician • Commuting, but often Travel for work or Telework • Satisfied, Motivated, Involved • Work Stimulating and Rewarding, despite Demanding • Low Digitalization • Lack of Human resources
Smart working	• Very Positive Perception • No differences with Previous Experiences • Autonomy, Responsibility, Satisfaction, Productivity • Ambiguous Employees Engagement • Data issues • Social & Environment	• Positive Perception • Previous Experiences • Efficiency, Autonomy • Data issues
SW & Commitment	• No Longer and Demanding • Free Time • Greater Well-being	• No Longer and Demanding • Free Time • Work-Life balance • Greater Well-being
SW & Organization	• Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Inadequate • Ambiguous Employee Engagement • No Impact on Coordination • Less External Coordination • Positive Impact on Performance, only for Suitable Workers	• No Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Inadequate • No Recognized Commitment by External Managers • No Impact on Coordination • No Less External Coordination • No Impact on Performance
Future	• Only Suitable Workers • Internal Platform • Evaluation Systems • Trust	• No Only Suitable Workers • Internal Platform • In Office only for Relationships

Organizational Unit C

Topics	Manager A	Employee A
Individual Characteristics	• 43 years old, married, two children • Dual Earner Couple • Household activities	• 58 years old, married, 2 children with different residence • Dual Earner Couple • No Household activities
Work & Satisfaction	• Dual role • Team: 8 internal resources • No Commuting • Satisfied • Lack of Human resources	• Administrative • No Commuting • Positive Relationships • Low Digitalization • Lack of Human resources
Smart working	• Positive Perception • More Efficiency, Autonomy, Responsibility • Ambiguous Employees Engagement • Difficulties for older employees • Low Digitalization of PA	• Very Positive Perception • Previous Experiences • Efficiency, Autonomy • Ambiguous Employees Engagement • Low Digitalization of PA • In Office whenever he could
SW & Commitment	• Longer and Demanding • No Free Time • No Greater Well-being	• Longer and Demanding • Free Time • Work-Life balance • No Greater Well-being
SW & Organization	• Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Inadequate • Ambiguous Employee Engagement • Less External Coordination • Positive Impact on Performance	• Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Inadequate • Ambiguous Employee Engagement • No Impact on Coordination • No Impact on Performance
Future	• Alternation • Introduce Managerial Figures • Only for Administrative	• Alternation • Suitable Jobs and Workers

First, using the analysis of the empirical results together with the previous literature, the answers to the topics covered during the interviews and to the main research question are presented:

- Organizational units with younger workers considered the smart working a tool to attract talent

- All the organizational units must to identify suitable jobs and workers

- Smart working improves well-being, despite longer and more demanding working days

- Previous experiences greatly improve the positive perception

- Same smart working adoption reduce coordination, communication, and evaluation systems

- Workers perceive more autonomy and responsibility also with same smart working adoption

- Without previous experiences, the commitment of workers is not adequately recognized

- Even with same smart working adoption, the impact on performance is ambiguous

- Organizational units with positive relationship perceive more social problems

To justify the answer to the main research question and explain the overall perceptions on the organizational units studied, a comparative analysis was carried out.

These findings may have implication on different levels.

First, this research is intended to be a tool to better understand the concept of smart working and its enablers and outcomes, especially in the Public Administration.

Secondly, Considering the analysis carried out, managers could use the information base on case to better implement smart working, exploiting the nature of research ("same adoption of smart working") to understand which aspects of this tool can be standardized within the organization and which ones are not.

Moreover, employees often decide not to use these methods, as evidenced by previous research. Consequently, this study can be a useful tool to ensure a greater understanding on the effects that smart working can have on their professional and private lives.

Finally, from a literary point of view, this study reveals some discrepancies between the theoretical findings and the empirical findings. The research not only seeks to fill this gap, but also highlights new aspects that require further investigation, since the search field is quite recent.

As for future research, there are several interesting topics that could be studied.

Firstly, it would be interesting to repeat the research later, when workers have returned to normal, to verify whether their perceptions on positive and negative aspects are the same or have been influenced by too long use of smart working. On this aspect, it would also be interesting to note whether the current considerations on the future adoption of smart working (for example, most of the interviewees argue that an alternation between work from home and work in the office is necessary) would be respected or present differences.

Given the results obtained from the study, future research could carry out the research considering organizational units that have structurally adopted flexible working methods before the Covid-19 pandemic, to verify whether previous experiences predict workers' perceptions.

Furthermore, comparing more units of analysis would allow for a more extensive comparison, verifying to what extent the perception of workers is influenced by the organizational context in which they operate.

Finally, it would be interesting to carry out research in an organization that has adopted the same smart working methods not for normative obligations, but within a well-defined strategic plan. In this way, it would be possible to make a comparison between the two different situations and verify if some aspects of smart working can be standardized.

Although the theme is very interesting and quite recent, the research, however, presents some limitations.

The first limitation of this research is the sample size. The research discusses the information obtained from 6 interviews with managers and employees from different departments of Regione Calabria. The analysis of a greater number of workers or the comparison with more case studies would allow to obtain more information and, consequently, more consistent results.

The second limitation is the research method used. The case study, to strengthen its validity, requires the collection of other evidence in addition to interviews, such as internal documents or company reports. As it is a new phenomenon, we have no previous internal reports or documents. Consequently, the research is limited to a comparison between empirical findings and existing literature.

The third limitation arises from the above problem. Since most of the interviewees have not previously adopted smart working, it is not possible to define whether their perception would have been the same if they had adopted different method defined according on their needs and characteristics. Again, we can only make a comparison with the literature.