

Assessing and Mitigating the Risk of Critical Knowledge Loss in Organizations: Insights from COVID-19 and the Great Resignation

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Abstract

This study addresses the challenges of knowledge loss and employee turnover caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Retaining critical knowledge is essential for organizational success, but remote work and the "Great Resignation" have disrupted knowledge sharing. The goal of this research is to modify Jennex's (2014) knowledge loss risk model to accommodate these changes. By reviewing literature on the "Great Resignation" and previous studies on knowledge loss, hypotheses for new contributing factors are proposed. A survey was conducted to investigate these factors, revealing four significant influences on employee departure: the absence of remote work or flexible hours, provision of equipment and technical support for remote work, preference for flexible hours based on household size, and the need for high-speed internet for remote work. These findings will be incorporated into the Jennex's knowledge loss risk predictor model.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Knowledge Loss, Risk Management.

1. Introduction

Businesses and organizations heavily rely on critical knowledge to inform their operations and decision-making processes. This knowledge is generated, utilized, and shared by individuals within the organization, serving as a valuable resource for their work performance. To preserve this crucial knowledge, organizations employ knowledge management (KM) and knowledge systems as repositories. However, not all essential knowledge is stored in digital or physical repositories; personal memories of individuals also serve as repositories within KM frameworks. While this system works well when individuals remain within the organization, it

poses a challenge when employees leave, resulting in knowledge loss unless deliberate efforts are made to capture and retain that knowledge.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges, leading to the shutdown of business centers across the United States, Europe, Australia, and Asia. To adapt, organizations swiftly implemented new processes and technologies to facilitate remote work and communication. Platforms like Zoom and Teams were adopted for conducting business operations, while social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok became essential for maintaining social relationships. Unfortunately, the pandemic-induced shutdowns resulted in employee layoffs and increased transience, and organizations faced difficulties rehiring former employees or retaining current ones. Moreover, the "Great Resignation" phenomenon from April 2021 onwards witnessed a substantial number of workers voluntarily leaving their jobs in the US. The "Great Resignation" refers to an unprecedented trend starting around April 2021, where a significant number of employees across various industries and countries began voluntarily resigning from their jobs. This mass exodus from the workforce was influenced by a combination of factors stemming from the global COVID-19 pandemic, including burnout, the desire for better work-life balance, a push for higher wages, and the increased feasibility of remote work. As people reevaluated their priorities and career aspirations, many decided to pursue different job opportunities, start their own businesses, or even take early retirements (Serenko 2023, Sull et al. 2022). These circumstances have led to two significant effects: the loss of knowledge due to departing employees and constraints on knowledge sharing among remaining employees in remote work settings.

During the lockdowns, organizations made efforts to make knowledge accessible to their employees. Some employed knowledge and KM systems to manage the storage, retrieval, and application of organizational knowledge remotely, while others

relied on informal communications among remote workers. However, it is evident that nearly every organization experienced significant knowledge loss, resulting in a decline in performance compared to pre-COVID-19 levels.

Regrettably, the knowledge loss prediction model proposed by Jennex (2014) did not successfully predict worker losses caused by COVID-19. This outcome was expected since the model was not designed to anticipate mass losses resulting from a pandemic. Surprisingly, the model also failed to predict losses due to the "Great Resignation," an aspect it was anticipated to capture. This raises the question of what the model overlooked and whether work dynamics have evolved to the point where additional factors must be considered.

Therefore, building upon Jennex's (2014) work, this study aims to address the research question: *What modifications are necessary for an improved knowledge loss prediction model?* To achieve this, we will review existing literature on the "Great Resignation" and combine it with prior research on knowledge loss to generate hypotheses regarding new factors for predicting knowledge loss. These hypotheses will be tested through a survey designed to assess their significance.

2. Background

2.1. The Knowledge Loss Predictor Model

Jennex (2014) introduced a model for predicting employee departures and strategies for capturing critical knowledge. This model was based on examples highlighting the consequences of knowledge loss. For instance, NASA's endeavor to return to the Moon, faced significant challenges due to the loss of expertise and outdated technology (Hambleton and Thorpe, 2022). The destruction of plans and retirement of knowledgeable personnel resulted in a lack of understanding and the inability to replicate past achievements (Jennex, 2006, 2013). Similar issues have been reported in commercial nuclear power, where rapid technological advancements and retiring experts hinder knowledge continuity (Jennex, 2006; Kosilov, et al., 2006). While progress brings benefits, it also raises concerns about potential vulnerabilities, such as the ability to handle manual processes during emergencies or disasters in critical systems (Jennex, 2006 and 2013). Although not as extreme, knowledge loss can cause many problems to organizations in different industries (e.g. Massingham 2018).

The idea of the Knowledge Loss Predictor Model is to determine the scores for knowledge loss consequences, likelihood of knowledge loss and

quality of knowledge source (Jennex 2014). This paper addresses mainly the determination of the likelihood of knowledge loss but touches also on issues of the consequences of loss and the quality of the knowledge source, due to developments presented in section 2.2. Although for example employee turnover prediction has received attention in the research community in the recent years (e.g. Ekawati 2019, Garg et al. 2022), the prediction of employees leaving, or their knowledge being lost in other ways, is not a completely resolved problem yet.

2.2. Lessons From COVID and the Great Resignation

The COVID-19 pandemic has served as a valuable teacher, imparting important lessons about the evolving nature of work and education. Numerous studies have highlighted the effectiveness of remote work, demonstrating that employees can perform well without constant office presence or micromanagement (Luze, 2021; Singh, 2022; Weinberg, 2021). This paradigm shift has given rise to hybrid work models, blending remote and office work, and enabling individuals to achieve a better work-life balance (Luze, 2021; Singh, 2022; Weinberg, 2021). A similar trend is observed in education, where remote learning has proven satisfactory for many adult learners, prompting a reevaluation of traditional teaching approaches (Luze, 2021; Singh, 2022; Weinberg, 2021).

In addition, organizations have come to recognize the importance of inclusivity and valuing the contributions of their employees and students. The heightened stress and lack of appreciation experienced during the pandemic have underscored the need for improved communication and recognition for remote workers and students (Luze, 2021; Singh, 2022; Weinberg, 2021). Fostering engagement and a sense of belonging is vital for long-term organizational success.

While knowledge loss risk predictor models can provide guidance on knowledge retention strategies, organizations must remain adaptable to unforeseen challenges that may arise (Jennex and Durcikova, 2013). By considering factors such as work patterns, employee engagement, and the impact of new technologies, organizations can effectively mitigate knowledge loss and sustain their operations.

The workplace landscape has undergone significant changes, prominently featuring remote work. Research investigating the reasons behind the "Great Resignation" indicates that workers prioritize remote work, flexible hours, and improved work-life balance (Boyle, 2022). However, some managers are

advocating for a return to the office, as exemplified by Elon Musk's directive to Tesla workers (Boyle, 2022). This shift may reflect a potential misuse of remote work as a means to initiate layoffs or employee separations.

Studies suggest that remote work, facilitated by platforms like Zoom, may have implications for innovation, potentially reducing the quantity of generated ideas (Brucks and Levav, 2022). However, these studies acknowledge that virtual meetings excel in selecting ideas for implementation (Brucks and Levav, 2022). This indicates that remote work can be successfully integrated into work profiles, even when innovation activities are involved.

According to the State of Remote Work 2021 Report by Owl Labs, remote workers experienced increased productivity, with a significant proportion (73%) returning to the office at least once a week (Owl Labs, 2022). Preferences regarding remote or office work are nearly evenly split, with some desiring a partial return to the office and others favoring full-time remote work (Owl Labs, 2022).

Considering the ongoing shifts in the work environment, it becomes crucial for the Knowledge Loss Predictor Model to incorporate lessons learned from the great resignation. Imposing an either/or ultimatum on employees may pose risks, as evidenced by General Motors, which is exploring alternative locations and work models to accommodate the preferences of their engineering talent (Root, 2022). While this paper does not aim to resolve the telecommuting debate, it recognizes the significance of novel factors considered by knowledge workers when deciding to leave. Therefore, it proposes the inclusion of these concerns in the knowledge loss predictor model to enhance its accuracy and relevance.

3. Modifying the Knowledge Loss Predictor Model

The great resignation phenomenon has indeed altered certain aspects related to the likelihood of employees leaving an organization, as well as the factors influencing their departure and the strategies employed to retain knowledge. While the consequences of someone leaving remain unchanged, there have been notable shifts in compensatory quality factors and actions taken to capture knowledge.

The COVID-19 pandemic was not likely the most important contributory cause leading to the dynamics that underly the “Great Resignation;” trends suggesting labor scarcity were in place prior to both the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing Great Resignation (Gittleman, 2022). As with the errant spark that leads to runaway forest fires in an arid and

drought-stricken area, reflections on the confluence of technologies that enable remote work, wage stagnation, and influences in the information environment have also adjusted attitudes towards remote work. There are likely “new norms” shaping and worth further inquiry.

Attitudes toward remote work and flexible work hours are now considered influential factors that affect the likelihood of an employee leaving. Furthermore, the perception of appreciation within the organization can also impact both the likelihood of departure and the quality factors associated with employee retention. To assess the impact of these factors, we conducted a survey aimed at gathering insights into workers' attitudes regarding remote work, flexible hours, and perceived appreciation.

In this section, we put forth three sets of propositions to guide the testing of these attitudes and their impact on employee retention. Many of the propositions are inspired by previous research, and some of them are hypotheses derived from other propositions herein. By systematically exploring these propositions, we can gain a better understanding of how these evolving attitudes shape the likelihood of employees leaving an organization and the quality factors that contribute to their decision. In addition to testing these propositions, the survey will include items to gauge the importance of these factors to the respondents.

3.1. The Effect of Remote Work on the Likelihood of Leaving

The first proposition that will be tested in this study is whether employees are more or less likely to leave their job if the work is remote. To investigate this proposition, it is important to consider various factors that could influence the desire for remote work. The following propositions will be examined:

Proposition 1a: Introverts are more likely to prefer remote work. Oseland et al. (2013) found that personality types influence individuals' preferred modes of interaction.

Proposition 1b: Extroverts are more likely to prefer office-based work. Building on the study by Oseland et al. (2013), it is hypothesized that extroverted individuals prefer in-person interactions.

Proposition 1c: Individuals with longer commutes are more likely to prefer remote work. Bai et al. (2021) found that longer commute times can impact work-life balance, suggesting that remote work may be more appealing in such cases.

Proposition 1d: Fear of reduced face-to-face interaction impacting promotion opportunities leads to a preference for office-based work. Cooper and

Kurland (2002) found this concern to be more prevalent in private organizations, and its impact on remote work will be examined.

Proposition 1e: Larger households or households with single fathers or shared caregiving duties are more likely to prefer remote work due to caregiving needs. Research by Allen et al. (2021) and Nash and Churchill (2020) support the influence of household dynamics on the adoption of remote work.

Proposition 1f: Organizations that provide technology for remote work are more likely to have employees who prefer remote work, since this may have been the reason for selecting the employer in the first place. This proposition suggests that organizational endorsement of remote work through technology provision influences employee preferences.

Proposition 1g: Reliable, high-speed internet connectivity is more likely to result in a preference for remote work. It is hypothesized that individuals with reliable internet access will be more inclined to choose remote work.

Proposition 1h: Having to provide personal technology for remote work leads to a preference for office-based work. This proposition assumes that the absence of organizational provision of technology implies a lack of endorsement for remote work.

Proposition 1i: Jobs requiring frequent interactions with colleagues, management, and/or clients are more likely to result in a preference for office-based work. This proposition suggests that job roles that rely heavily on face-to-face interactions will discourage remote work.

Proposition 1j: If the focus of an employee's social life is primarily with work colleagues, they are more likely to prefer office-based work. Soroui (2021) found that remote work can impact employees' embeddedness in the organization and local community, which can be linked to the social aspects of work.

Proposition 1k: If the focus of an employee's social life is primarily with people outside the company, they are more likely to prefer remote work. This proposition builds on Soroui's (2021) findings regarding the impact of remote work on employees' embeddedness in the organization and local community.

Proposition 1l: Having the ability to work remotely will increase perceived appreciation. Academic research from Kelliher and Anderson (2008) and practitioner research from Luze (2021), Singh (2022), and Weinberg (2021) provide support for this proposition.

Proposition 1m: Having the ability to work remotely will improve work-life balance. Academic

research from Sanders and Karmowska (2020) and practitioner research from Luze (2021), Singh (2022), and Weinberg (2021) suggest a positive relationship between remote work and work-life balance.

3.2. Likelihood of Leaving Based on Flexible Work Hours

The next set of propositions relate to flexible work hours. Measures will be used to assess if flexible work hours are desired and if their absence would encourage employees to leave. In addition, the study aims to identify factors that can predict the need or desire for flexible work hours. The propositions are as follows:

Proposition 2a: Larger households, including those with single fathers or shared caregiving duties, are more likely to desire flexible work hours due to caregiving responsibilities. Nash and Churchill (2020) found that flexibility in work hours is essential for women who are both caregivers and workers, and this proposition extends that finding to larger households.

Proposition 2b: Personal needs during normal working hours increase the desire for flexible work hours. This proposition suggests that individuals with various personal obligations, such as medical appointments or school-related activities, would prefer flexible work hours to accommodate these needs.

Proposition 2c: Individuals with longer commutes are more likely to desire flexible work hours. Bai et al. (2021) found that long commute times impact work-life balance and family dynamics, supporting the hypothesis that individuals with lengthy commutes would prefer flexibility in their work hours.

3.3. Likelihood of Leaving and Quality Factors Based on Perceived Appreciation

Feeling appreciated is a fundamental aspect of human nature, influencing worker satisfaction and engagement within organizations. However, accurately predicting perceived appreciation, underappreciation, or unappreciation remains challenging. By assessing the importance of these factors, we can guide organizations in mitigating the risk of underappreciation and its potential consequences. This is an area of future research using the following propositions.

Proposition 3a: Remote work amplifies the impact of previous work-engagement and work-satisfaction factors on perceived appreciation. Promoleaf (2021) studied worker engagement and appreciation, finding that engagement alone does not reliably predict perceived appreciation. However,

limited research has explored work-engagement in the remote work setting (Mäkikangas et al., 2022). Recent findings indicate that previous work-engagement and work-satisfaction factors may be amplified by remote work, influencing the perception of appreciation (Mäkikangas et al., 2022).

Proposition 3b: Lack of support, being overworked, being micromanaged, lack of recognition, and infrequent contact are indicators of perceived unappreciation or underappreciation. Promoleaf (2021) identified several key indicators of perceived unappreciation or underappreciation, including a lack of support, excessive workload, micromanagement, lack of recognition, and infrequent contact. These factors can contribute to feelings of underappreciation among workers.

Proposition 3c: Feeling underappreciated increases the likelihood of leaving the organization. Promoleaf's (2021) findings highlight the significant consequence of feeling underappreciated, as it can drive employees to consider leaving the organization. Recognizing the impact of underappreciation is crucial for organizations aiming to retain their valuable workforce.

4. Methodology and Data Collection

The survey was designed on Qualtrics, grounding on the presented hypotheses and discussions. It was subsequently disseminated to a diverse audience including senior undergraduate and graduate students, faculty members on the AIS list server, members of various professional associations linked to the researchers, and further amplified through posts on platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook.

One hundred and sixty-seven responses were collected. Responses were analyzed by testing hypothesis items for significance using t-test or a chi-square test if multiple groups were tested. Before running these tests, we split the responses to groups: need remote (scores of 4 or 5)/no remote (scores of 1 – 3) and need flex (scores of 4 or 5)/no flex (scores of 1 – 3).

While the response count may appear limited at first glance, a deeper dive into the age and professional background of our participants (as detailed in Table 15) reveals that this study boasts of a varied representation of knowledge workers. These participants hail from a spectrum of professions and are at different junctures in their career paths. This diversity is crucial, lending a significant weight to their perspectives, making them particularly pertinent for this study. The findings, therefore, offer a reasonably broad applicability, especially for roles encompassed by the Jennex Knowledge Loss

Predictor model – primarily knowledge work and experts. It's pivotal to underscore that the underlying premise of this study assumes the work tasks in question are feasible to perform remotely. Hence, the model may not be directly transferable to roles, like certain blue-collar jobs, necessitating physical presence at the workplace.

5. Results

5.1. Likelihood of Leaving Based on Remote Work

Proposition 1a and 1b: Introverts are more likely to prefer remote work/ Extroverts are more likely to prefer office-based work. This proposition is not supported (The chi-square statistic is 0.5984. The p-value is .963242. The result is not significant at $p < .05$.) Table 1 shows the distribution of responses to the item asking if the respondent was an extrovert/introvert being predominately introvert for all respondents. This could be because the survey asked for concurrence rather than looking at indicators of being an extrovert/introvert. Still, personality type is not a good predictor of leaving.

Table 1: Introvert vs Extrovert

Group	How would you rate your personality type (# respondents indicating response)				
	Strong Extrovert	Extrovert	Neither	Introvert	Strong Introvert
Need Remote	14	22	17	39	7
No Remote	9	14	11	27	7

Proposition 1c: Individuals with longer commutes are more likely to prefer remote work. Table 2 shows responses on length and time of commute. The chi-square statistic is 9.2998. The p-value is .054027; The result is not significant at $p < .05$. This proposition is not supported.

Table 2 Commute Length and Time

Group	Length of Commute in miles/time				
	:>45 miles /1hr	>30 miles/ minute	20 miles /30 min	<15 miles/2 0 minute	<10 miles/ 10 minute
Number of group members/% with this commute					
Need Remote	18/ 18%	19/ 19%	30/ 31%	16/ 16%	15/ 15%
No Remote	9/ 13%	12/ 18%	11/ 16%	15/ 22%	21/ 31%

Proposition 1d: Fear of reduced face-to-face interaction impacting promotion opportunities leads to a preference for office-based work. Table 3 shows the results. The p-value for a two-tailed t-test was 0.07 (t=1.83), thus not supporting this proposition.

Table 3 Will I Be Promoted If I Work Remotely

Group	I Am Less Likely To Get Promoted If I Work Remotely	
	Avg	Std Dev (N)
Need Remote	3.03	1.14 (101)
No Remote	2.82	1.15 (68)

Proposition 1e: Larger households or households with single fathers or shared caregiving duties are more likely to prefer remote work due to caregiving needs. To respect the privacy of respondents we only asked about the size of the household. Table 4 shows the numbers of respondents for each size of household. The chi-square statistic is 0.6856. The p-value is .953095. The result is not significant at $p < .05$.

Table 4 Size of Household vs Remote/Non-Remote

# in Household	Need Remote	No Remote
>6	0	1
5-6	14	7
3-4	44	30
2	29	22
1	11	8

Proposition 1f: Organizations that provide technology for remote work are more likely to have employees who prefer remote work. Table 5 summarizes response and clearly shows that respondents want organizational technology support (The chi-square statistic is 12.0731. The p-value is .016816. The result is significant at $p < .05$.)

Table 5 Organizational Tech Support Desired

	Need Remote	No Remote
supply all tech/tech support	32	18
supply some tech/tech support	43	26
some tech support	18	7
fine with no support	7	8
I do not work remotely	0	8

Proposition 1g/1h: Reliable, high-speed internet connectivity is more likely to result in a preference for remote work. Having to provide personal technology for remote work leads to a preference for office-based work. Table 6 reports results. Both propositions are significant at $p < 0.05$. Those wanting to work remotely agree that having a reliable, high-speed connection helps them choose remote work. In

addition, this group agrees that having to provide their own equipment will prevent them working remotely.

Table 6 What is Needed to Work Remotely

Group	I am more apt to work in an office if I have to supply my own tech p=0.0052 (t=2.83)		I am more apt to work remotely if I have a high-speed reliable Internet connection p = 0.025 (t = 2.26)	
	Avg	Std Dev (N)	Avg	Std Dev (N)
Needs Remote	3.47	1.30 (101)	1.29	0.82 (101)
No Remote	2.91	1.20 (68)	1.61	1.01 (68)

Proposition 1i: Jobs requiring frequent interactions with colleagues, management, and/or clients are more likely to result in a preference for office-based work. Those who want to work remotely do not agree with this while those who don't want to remotely do agree (t=3.42, $p = 0.0000$). Table 7 summarizes these results.

Table 7 Impact of Frequent Client/Collage Interactions

Group	I am not likely to work remotely if my job requires frequent interactions with colleagues/clients.	
	Avg	Std Dev (N)
Needs Remote	3.0	1.26 (101)
No Remote	2.06	1.15 (68)

Proposition 1j/1k: If the focus of an employee's social life is primarily with work colleagues, they are more likely to prefer office-based work (t=3.62, $p=0.0004$). If the focus of an employee's social life is primarily with people outside the company, they are more likely to prefer remote work (t=5.43, $p = 0.0001$). Table 8 summarizes the results..

Table 8 Social Life Impact on Remote Work

Group	Since Most Of Friends And Social Life Is Associated With Work I'd Rather Work In The Office		Since Most Of My Friends Are Outside Of Work I'd Rather Work Remotely	
	Avg	Std Dev (N)	Avg	Std Dev (N)
Needs Remote	3.86	1.11 (101)	2.48	1.04 (101)
No Remote	3.18	1.32 (68)	3.38	1.08 (68)

Proposition 1l/1m: Having the ability to work remotely will increase perceived appreciation. Having the ability to work remotely will improve work-life

balance. Table 9 summarizes results. Those who want remote strongly agree it helps work life balance but just agree on appreciation ($t=3.56, p=0.0005; t=5.79, p=0.0001$). Lower score on appreciation is probably a result of everyone working remotely during COVID-19

Table 9 Impact on Appreciation and Work/Life Balance

Group	My Organization Appreciates Me More If They Let Me Work Remotely		Working Remotely Helps Improve My Work/Life Balance	
	Avg	Std Dev (N)	Avg	Std Dev (N)
Needs Remote	2.28	1.16 (101)	1.38	0.76 (101)
No Remote	2.91	1.08 (68)	2.23	1.15 (68)

5.2. Likelihood of Leaving Based on Flexible Work Hours

Proposition 2a: Larger households, including those with single fathers or shared caregiving duties, are more likely to desire flexible work hours due to caregiving responsibilities. Table 10 presents the results. The chi-square statistic is 4.6219. The p-value is .328336. The result is not significant at $p < .05$.

Table 10 Size of Household vs Flex/No Flex

# in Household	Need Flex	No Flex
>6	1	0
5-6	20	1
3-4	59	15
2	39	12
1	15	4

Proposition 2b: Personal needs during normal working hours increase the desire for flexible work hours. Table 11 presents the results, those needing flex do agree that they have personal needs during work hours ($t=4.16, p = 0.0001$).

Table 11 Impact of Personal Needs on Flex Hours

Group	I am not likely to work remotely if my job requires frequent interactions with colleagues/clients	
	Avg	Std Dev (N)
Needs Flex	2.33	1.17 (138)
No Flex	3.27	1.06 (32)

Proposition 2c: Individuals with longer commutes are more likely to desire flexible work hours. Tables 12 (The chi-square statistic is 1.5065. The p-value is .82549. The result is not significant at $p < .05$.) and 13 present the results ($t=1.91; p = 0.05$).

Like the impact on remote work, length of commute seems to have a minimal impact on those wanting flex hours. This could be because length or time of commute is not the right parameter and instead we should look at cost of commute. Chamber of Commerce (2023) provides a study on the most expensive commute cities in the United States. We did not collect data on location but this could help explain the results.

Table 12 Commute Length and Time

Group	Length of Commute in miles/time				
	>45 miles/hr	>30 miles/45 minute	20 miles /30 min	<15 miles/20 minute	<10 miles/10 minute
	Number of group members/% with this commute				
Need Flex	20/15%	26/19%	34/25%	25/19%	29/22%
No Flex	7/23%	5/17%	7/23%	6/20%	5/17%

Table 13 Impact of Length of Commute on Flex Hours

Group	I need flex hours because of the length of my commute	
	Avg	Std Dev (N)
Needs Flex	3.05	1.30 (138)
No Flex	3.53	1.20 (32)

Proposition 2d/e: Having the ability to work flexible hours increases perceived appreciation. Having the ability to work flexible hours improves work-life balance. Table 14 summarizes results. Those who want flex hours strongly agree it helps work life balance ($t=3.95; p = 0.0001$) and agree on appreciation ($t=6.12; p = 0.0001$). Lower score on appreciation is probably a result of everyone working remotely during COVID-19

Table 14 Impact on Appreciation and Work/Life Balance

Group	My Organization Appreciates Me More If They Let Me Work Flex Hours		Working Flex Hours Helps Improve My Work/Life Balance	
	Avg	Std Dev (N)	Avg	Std Dev (N)
Need Flex	1.79	1.00 (138)	1.31	0.65 (138)
No Flex	2.58	1.10 (32)	2.23	1.15 (32)

5.3. Attitudes Toward Work

To help interpret the previous data it is important to look at some general data on the respondents and their opinions on their jobs. Table 15 shows the distribution of respondents to the type of organization worked for and their age group.

Table 15: Organization and Age Distribution

Type of Organization	#	Age Range	#
non-profit or government	49	<25	17
public companies	102	25-35	39
unemployed/retired and not looking for a job	7	35-45	50
college/university and will be looking for a job after graduation	8	45-55	28
		55-65	25
		>65	8

Table 16 summarizes the hours respondents want to work.

Table 16: Desired Work Hours Distribution

# Hours I Desire to Work	#	My current position meets work hour expectation	#
>60 hours	6	yes	121
40-60 hours	38	no want to work more	10
40 hours	56	no want to work less	29
30-40 hours	47	I am not working	8
20-30 hours	14		
<20 hours	5		
I don't want to work	3		

Table 17 summarizes attitudes towards the current and desired jobs. Only 56 respondents are not interested in changing positions and only 5 want to work in an office with a standard 40-hour week.

Table 17: Desired Work Hours Distribution

How I Feel About My Current Job	#	What I Desire In My Next Job	#
happy in my job and not looking to change	56	will allow as much remote as I want and has flex hours	60
I am unhappy in my job but cannot make a change	9	mix of in office and remote work with some flex hours	65
I am happy in my job but always open	84	allow me to work remotely with flex	27

or looking for something better		hours when I need to	
I am unhappy in my job and actively looking to change	9	be in an office but have flex hours	9
I currently don't have a job	10	be in an office with a 40 hour standard week	5
	5	be in a office working a set part time schedule	1

6. Conclusions and Future Research

The research aimed to identify factors related to remote work and flexible hours for modifying the Jennex (2014) Knowledge Loss Risk predictor model. While our study provides insightful findings, it is not without its limitations. Firstly, the response rate, though diverse in terms of age and professional background, is relatively limited in sheer number, potentially limiting the breadth of perspectives. The current study's representation leans heavily on knowledge workers from varied fields, which, although ensuring relevance for the roles encompassed by the Jennex Knowledge Loss Predictor model, may not capture the complete spectrum of workplace scenarios. Moreover, the overarching nature of our survey, while offering a broad view, might not account for the nuances of specific institutional cultures. The impact of institutional culture on responses can significantly influence workers' attitudes towards remote work and flexibility. Therefore, for a more holistic understanding, it becomes imperative to conduct focused investigations within defined contexts, such as specific institutions. By doing so, we can more accurately gauge the influence of institutional culture and other micro-factors on employees' perspectives.

While many factors investigated were not applicable to the model, one clear finding emerged: workers desire remote work and flexible hours. Only 3.5% preferred working in an office with a fixed 40-hour workweek or less. Additionally, only 33.5% of respondents expressed no intention of changing positions. It was evident that employees who have the possibility for remote work and flexible hours feel more valued and experience a better work-life balance. This finding is in line with Luze (2021), Singh (2022), and Weinberg (2021). Consequently, the conclusion drawn is that workers are willing to change jobs to achieve remote work and flexible hours. The research identified four factors influencing employee departure: the absence of remote work or flexible hours, provision of equipment and technical support for remote work, preference for flexible hours based

on household size, and the need for high-speed internet for remote work. These factors will be integrated into the predictor model. Absence of remote work or flexible hours will receive the highest possible likelihood score of 10 due to its overwhelming support. Provision of equipment and technical support will be scored a 5. Size of household will use a sliding scale for different sizes of households. High speed Internet will be scored as a +1 point as a quality factor.

Organizations face knowledge loss when employees depart, whether through traditional means or more extreme cases like the COVID-19 pandemic. Massingham (2008) highlighted three impacts of employee loss: diminished organizational memory contribution, loss of relational knowledge with internal and external networks, and decreased work performance leading to reduced productivity. Implementing a critical knowledge retention strategy can mitigate knowledge loss, ensuring crucial knowledge is preserved. However, Parise et al. (2006) discovered that, at that time, only half of surveyed organizations had identified critical skills necessary for future growth, with a significant portion deeming skill definition as unimportant. Furthermore, many retention approaches only capture a fraction of what makes an individual successful and knowledgeable. History illustrates the substantial risk of losing critical knowledge, particularly when organizations rely on employees' individual knowledge storage.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the "Great Resignation" have unveiled a new perspective on the relationship between knowledge management (KM) and employer-employee dynamics. Acute talent scarcity creates a competitive marketplace, emphasizing the importance of effective KM for both retention and significant gains. The enduring value of effective KM necessitates appropriate theoretical models to understand shifts in employee behavior and preferences, such as the "Great Resignation." Future research should utilize systems theories, particularly the work of Checkland (1989) and Vickers (1968). System theories can aid in comprehending the changes in attitudes and behaviors reflected in the "Great Resignation" through the lens of action, reflection, judgement, and action. These theoretical frameworks contribute to an appreciative system where employers, employees, and knowledge resources interact to generate observable phenomena. The propositions put forth in this paper aim to advance the current understanding within this appreciative system, aligning with the principles advocated by systems theorists like Checkland and Vickers.

By advancing the appreciative system that underpins KM, valuable insights can guide adjustments to the Jennex knowledge loss predictor

model. Empirical results from this study can determine the utility of the propositions, but they offer the greatest value when considered within broader theoretical frameworks related to systems thinking and change.

One could argue that the shifts in work attitudes, such as the rise of remote work and other worker-centric practices witnessed in the "Great Resignation," present a challenge for problem framing and setting rather than problem solving. While initial observations may appear to align with known structures that warrant known solution approaches, a systems theoretic approach encourages the propositions in this paper to serve as entry points for reframing the Jennex knowledge loss predictor model and capturing contemporary circumstances and understanding. Adopting a systems theoretic approach invites further investigation into the implications of changing workplace norms (Wasko and Dickey, 2023) and facilitates a better understanding of how these norms impact KM.

8. References

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