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## The extent in which technology influences work intensity and the implications of job quality

There have been significant changes in the work places because of the advanced technology has influenced how the world carries out business and has interconnected countries in carrying out business. This essay will be highlighting how technology influences job quality through hours worked, the area of focus throughout this essay will be on the topic of how technology influences work intensity for individuals and how organisations utilise this within service sector. The case study will analyse how technology is utilised by organisations through control, technologic tools and organisational policy. The case study will be focused on the organisation Hays Recruitment Ltd and has been created based on strategic reports published by the organisation, articles on technology within the workforces and published articles regarding work intensity. As technology is increasingly growing and shaping the world of work, it is important to understand how this can affect and change employment practices and employee well-being. As there is evidence that suggests this, the key issues that will be explored is regarding employees' welfare such as mental well-being, work-life balance and job satisfaction.

Literature Review: Currently, Great Britain and the world has changed significantly because of the interconnected economy stimulated using technology. Technology has increasingly been used in businesses changing the way in which individuals work. Moving from the manufacturing industry to a service sector, technology has significantly changed the range of jobs available and revolutionised the labour market creating obsolete jobs (Singh and Finn 2004). Technology has influenced the production process, creating a more efficient and productive working environment (Whiteley 2004). Britain amongst other countries is highly renowned for it's long working culture environment.

Research of Burchell and Fagan (2004) used the 'speed of work' as an indicator to measure work intensity which revealed Europeans were working more intensely in 2001. These findings have been later supported by Green (2001) in his study of concentration of extensive work effort identifying trends in working hours in the later twentieth century using the average hours of worked. The study highlighted the increase in the dispersion of hours worked and working effort had increased by 46% in non-manual workers establishments, required effort increased by 61.% within the UK.

Furthermore, work intensification has created detrimental effects to individuals' well-being within the workplace. There has been a significant increase in reports surrounding the concerns of the stress industry known as the 'British Disease (Burke and El-Kot 2009). The literature can

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further highlight the continuous growth of this industry with little solutions being created to solve this issue in contrast to other European countries. As working intensity is an increasingly researched topic, it is important to note there is lack of qualitative understanding of changing work pressures that can help evaluate social and national economic performance when referring to the previous literature of Green (2001), Bruchell and Fagan (2004). Therefore, this can pose further implications the findings discussed because of the lack qualitative understanding achieving more indepth and specific analysis in regards to the quality of data produced to further build on (Bryman and Bell 2016).

Case Study: Hays plc is a FTSE 250 organisation operating in over 33 countries which specialises in recruitment across permanent, temporary and contracting markets. Hays' business model incorporates 'sector business leading technology recruitment tools' which enables employees to 'develop and deliver the best services and products for clients and candidates meeting their evolving needs' (Hays 2017). Hays places themselves in delivering high quality service through embracing technology which allows them to adopt a high road strategy. The Hays Report 2017 identifies 'mega trends and future of the world of work' that influences their business model. Firstly, the report highlights their emphasis for employees to remain flexible to client demands to achieve customer satisfaction and growth. This is achieved through the emergence of new and evolving technologies such as 3 story software, cloud based vendor management and workforce management software. The technological tools discussed allow recruitment consultants to efficiently process and share information to increase their competitiveness within the recruitment industry. Technology controlling work influencing work intensity.

The organisational strategy Hays had adopted is a High road strategy which has adopted the approach in invested and equipped their employees with tools and resources that enable employees to grow and learn on the job. Hays Ltd have adopted a High Road Strategy approach by providing technology called 'OneTouch' which is central to their business. This is a database that controls all data of customers, employee performance to information about clients. The adoption of this technology by Hays has obtained great influence on the way in which workers carry their work. The implementation of OneTouch is an example of a prevailing method for analysing office work from clock in devices, time sheets, reports on what staff are doing on small time intervals, software determining how many unsuccessful phone calls have been attempted. Hays have adopted the use of technology in which workers carry out their work through broken down into controlled parts where information is standardised through the OneTouch system being easily accessible and efficient for employees to use. Although, this does suggest directly negative effects on the individual carrying out their job, this mirrors the idea of 'Tayloristic' practices (Karmarkar 2004; Whiteley 2004) being utilised at Hays. These 'best practices' adopted by Hays reinforces management to understand time consumed in standard office activities (Strassman 1985) and which increases the control on individuals and

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pressure to achieve targets at work. This supports the research of Zamarian and Maggi (2010) that highlights organisations adopt a strategy to utilise technology and at Hays Ltd can utilise their software to control and monitor individuals' work. This can pose long-term effects of individuals that can influence lack of motivation because of subtle micromanagement techniques.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration and analysis of technology influencing work intensity from the individuals to the employees perspective. There are key factors to consider. Technology is constantly evolving and therefore organisations must proactively have a strategy in place to address implications of the known 'British Disease' and long hour culture in Britain. The case study has highlighted that although technology in organisations can be used to an advantage for employees to make work easily accessible, the same use of technology can monitor and control individuals for profits in organisations. Secondly, technology has changed the shape of working styles which will ultimately alter the way in which business carry out business and must adapt their organisation to do so. Thirdly, to what extent does technology influence efficiency for employees and whether the impact on using technology on a 24-7 basis poses more detrimental than positive effects to the organisation. Hays operate within the service sector catering to customer demands. Despite their 'high road' strategy towards employees, what is crucial for the future of the service sector and organisations like Hays is for organisations to actively understand the implications of the use of technology, how much time is being spent on technology devices and to create policies in place to benefit the well-being on being used and individuals as a long-term strategy. Ultimately, for the UK Labour market to achieve high performance and business success, it is vital for such policies and best practices on the use of technology for employees should be implemented in their organisation. There is further work, success and research to be carried out within this growing topic, however once issue is clear. To maintain employee wellbeing and engagement, organisations must take ownership in creating a working environment that allows employees to escape the 24-7 technology culture to promote a healthy work-life balance which businesses and European countries can and have evidently benefited from.

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