

Job Sharing Practices in Strategic Leadership Positions

A qualitative practice research at the Dutch National Police



Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen

Name:	Esmee de Rover
Student number:	S4203550
Address:	Houthof 1, Nijmegen
Phone number:	06-24241174
E-mail:	esmee.rover@student.ru.nl
Signature:	
Institution:	Radboud University Nijmegen
Date:	18-06-2018
Supervisor:	Prof. Dr. Y.W.M. Benschop
Second examiner:	Dr. C. Ossenkop

Preface

Please find my master thesis about the benefits, drawbacks and conditions of job sharing within strategic leadership positions at the Dutch National Police. Several people supported me and helped me to finish this research, and I would like to thank them all. First, I would like to thank my supervisor prof. dr. Yvonne Benschop for always being available and willing to help me during the whole process. Your enthusiasm about gender, diversity and inclusion inspired me from the beginning of my first master's program, and I am thankful for the opportunity you provided me to further investigate this topic within the Dutch National Police. Your support, feedback and enthusiasm helped me a lot during the writing process of this thesis. Second, I would like to thank my second examiner, dr. Carolin Ossenkop, for her constructive feedback related to my research proposal.

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to gain insight into the possible benefits, drawbacks and conditions of job sharing practices within strategic leadership positions, focusing on both the job sharer and the organization. The findings of this study are based on a practice approach, combining the Interview To The Double method, shadowing practices, and interviews within the Dutch National Police. The participants of this study indicate as main benefits of job sharing an improvement of work-life balance and personal development for the job sharers, resulting in enhanced productivity as main organizational benefit. Besides, job sharing practices are indicated as solution to increase diversity within strategic leadership positions. As downside of job sharing practices are mentioned the energy, time and double costs of employee benefits, and the possible ambiguity that might arise within the organization. However, certain conditions, such as a good preparation and being a progressive organization could minimize these drawbacks. In this way, this study shows how the drawbacks of job sharing practices within strategic leadership positions could be erased, revealing the potential for organizational change towards greater diversity within strategic leadership positions due to job sharing practices.

Keywords: Job sharing practices | Strategic leadership | Inequality regimes | New Ways of Working | Practice research

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1. Introduction

1.1 Problem context

Nowadays, many employers and employees are looking for ways to alter the amount of time committed to work, in order to reconcile work and personal life. Employers increasingly make use of New Ways of Working (NWW) to attract and retain professionals throughout their careers, in line with the wish of employees to find a balance between their personal and professional lives at different stages throughout their life courses (Gascoigne & Kelliher, 2018). Simultaneously, employees are trying to achieve a flexible and sustainable career (Valcour, 2015), which might be hard in professional organizations where working full-time with long days is the most common image to reach higher positions within the organizational hierarchy (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002).

This is the point where inequalities arise, since not every employee perceives the possibility to meet the standards of working full-time, and consequently to experience the same career opportunities as full-time employees. As stated by Acker (2006), organizations contain certain practices, processes, actions and meanings which result in class, gender, age and racial inequalities. Employees within organizations face systematic disparities between control over how to organize work, over promotions and interesting work, over security in employment, respect and pleasure in work and work relations. This is also the case for employees who do not meet the traditional working arrangements, which is in the Netherlands a significant case, since 50 percent of all employees in the Netherlands do not work on a full-time basis (Eurostat, 2015).

The reasons for part-time work vary across different life stages of employees (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005). Within the Netherlands, a social democratic welfare state model formally helps to support work-life balance as a right for every employee (Abendroth & Den Dulk, 2011), explaining the great amount of part-time employees. During the start of their careers, especially female employees make use of the possibility to work part-time, since the majority of women still do take on primary responsibility for childcare and domestic work (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005). Reluctance among men to take up flexible working due to the perceived negative attitudes of line managers and negative consequences for their career progression is another reason why women are more often working part-time than men (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005). However, during later stages of employees' careers, both men and women might benefit from working part-time, in order to increase their work-life balance, to combine work with leisure or caregiving tasks and to work towards their retirement (Spencer, 2017).

When looking at strategic leadership positions within organizations, it might even be harder to work according to NWW practices, since the 'ideal worker' is conceptualized as a manager or professional who works full-time, on-site and puts in long hours (Blair-Loy, 2009; Acker, 1990). Overall, this does not meet the standard image of strategic leadership positions. Working part-time might reinforce traditional assumptions about the low ambition of part-timers (Benschop, Van den Brink, Doorewaard, & Leenders, 2013), which is in line with the image of strategic leadership positions which consists of full-time employees.

1.2 Contribution and research question

Employees within strategic leadership positions face many ideological characteristics which need to be fulfilled in order to maintain their positions (Blair-Loy, 2009). Working according to NWW practices within strategic leadership positions might seem attractive for employees to increase their flexibility and enhance their work-life balance (Russell, O'Connell, & McGinnity, 2009). However, in line with their job demands, working according to traditional working arrangements seems to be preferred by employers (Blair-Loy, 2009). From the employer side, it could also be beneficial to include more flexible employees within higher functions of the organization, since this might increase the possibility to attract a more diverse workforce with all benefits associated with this, such as keeping talented employees (Spencer, 2017). However, implementing flexible work arrangements could be hard, since this requires changes in the organizational design (Blair-Loy, 2009).

When looking at the numbers of the Dutch labor market, only two percent of the part-time employees works as a manager, compared to ten percent of all full-time employees (SCP, 2016). So, why is this the case? And is there no option for two part-time employees to work together in one strategic function, so that the number of part-time employees could increase in order to decrease the inequalities between full-time and part-time employees? Part-time work is usually defined as: "Regular wage employment with hours of work substantially shorter than normal in the established concern" (Thurman & Trah, 1990, p. 23). Working less hours than a full-time week seems to be the reason why part-time work is not preferable within strategic leadership positions, since 'ideal workers' are characterised as managers and professionals who work full-time, on-site and put in long hours (Blair-Loy, 2009; Acker, 1990).

A not so common NWW practice to increase flexibility for employees is called job-sharing, defined as: "A work arrangement in which two people hold responsibility for one full-time position" (Spencer, 2017, p. 80). The strategic tasks could be divided or the two employees could work together on certain tasks in order to broaden the input, which could be even more

productive and innovative compared to one full-time employee within a strategic leadership position (Spencer, 2017). The remaining question is; could job-sharing practices be a solution for employees seeking for more flexibility within strategic leadership functions, or do the drawbacks of flexible work arrangements outweigh the associated benefits?

The aim of this study is to gain insight into the possible benefits, drawbacks and conditions of job sharing practices within strategic leadership positions, focusing on both the job sharer and the organization. By doing this, the following research question will be answered:

What are possible benefits, drawbacks and conditions of job sharing practices within strategic leadership positions for both job sharers and the organization?

The Dutch National Police will serve as a case organization, where one job sharing duo will be shadowed and their team and 2 other job sharing duos will be interviewed to find out more about the benefits and drawbacks of job sharing practices for themselves as well as for the organization, using a practice approach. This practice approach combines different research methods, such as the Interview To The Double method, shadowing practices, and interviews with subordinates of one of the job sharing duos. By doing this, the researcher tries to show how the drawbacks of job sharing practices within strategic leadership positions could be minimized, by focussing on the potential of job sharing practices.

As a result of this research, multiple contributions will be made to the scientific and societal debates around job sharing practices. First, this study contributes to the current literature about NWW practices within strategic leadership positions, with a focus on job sharing practices. This research tries to gain insight into the conditions under which a less traditional working practice could be beneficial for both the job sharers and the organization, in order to decrease the existing inequality regimes within organizations. Besides, providing the possibility of job sharing for employees could increase diversity within the workforce, since employees might make use of part-time working hours within strategic leadership positions for different reasons. As such, innovations and productivity might increase (Spencer, 2017). Within the literature related to job sharing, these insights are rather new and also more understanding of the possible benefits and drawbacks of job sharing practices within strategic leadership positions might fill a gap within literature.

Second, a more practical contribution will be made with this research, since employees within strategic leadership positions could possibly benefit from job sharing practices if they prefer to enhance their work-life balance, if these benefits outweigh the drawbacks of flexible

work arrangements. This is the case for strategic leadership positions within the Dutch National Police, but the insights could also be beneficial for strategic leadership functions within other 24/7 active organizations. Employees with strategic leadership functions could have all kinds of personal reasons to look for more flexibility, and job sharing could be a solution for them. Besides, job sharing practices could also benefit employers, which is another practical contribution of this research. For instance, the current male-female ratio at strategic level at the Dutch police force is 60 to 40 percent (Politie, 2018). This ratio might become more equal when striving for more diversity, for instance by introducing job sharing practices at this level of the organization. Besides, more flexibility and a better work-life balance could reduce the number of absenteeism for the organization, so that the target of 6,5 percent might be met (Politie, 2018). In order to increase the beneficial outcomes of job sharing practices, some important conditions are sketched which could help to increase the positive outcomes of job sharing and to reduce the drawbacks, for both the job sharers and the organization.

1.3 Outline research

This report is structured in five chapters. Following the introduction in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework and starts with discussing the theories used as theoretical foundation for this study. Within the theoretical framework, the concepts of working arrangements and job sharing practices are introduced, and strategic leadership positions are examined. Based on this, the foundation for job sharing within strategic leadership positions is formulated, to which this study contributes. Chapter 3 consists of the methodology section, which provides a detailed description of the research strategy, data collection, research quality, research ethics and the case organization. In Chapter 4, the results of the analysis of the interview to the double, shadowing practices, and interviews are presented. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a conclusion and discussion with an answer to the research question, and recommendations for future research and policy implications.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Inequality regimes within organizations

According to Blair-Loy (2009), there is an ideology embedded within organizations where managers and professionals work full-time, on-site and put in long hours. Managers and professionals who meet these standards, are seen as ‘ideal workers’ (Williams, 2001; Acker, 1990), and they are more likely to move up the organizational hierarchy. Remarkably, ideal workers are expected to come in early and stay late, travel at a moment’s notice and have few commitments outside work (Blair-Loy, 2009; Williams, 2001; Acker, 1990). These kinds of unwritten rules could be seen as inequality regimes, defined as: “Loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations” (Acker, 2006, p. 443). These inequality regimes lead to inequalities within organizations, which are: “Systematic disparities between participants in power and control over goals, resources, and outcomes; opportunities for promotion and interesting work; security in employment and benefits; pay and other monetary rewards; respect; and pleasures in work and work relations” (Acker, 2006, p. 443). As such, not every employee perceives the possibility to meet the standards of working full-time, and thus to experience the same career opportunities as full-time employees. Especially during the start of their careers, women seem to have more obligations outside work than men do. However, multiple reasons, such as being a single parent, disabled, older employee or seeking to find a better work-life balance, might increase the wish to work in a more flexible way (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005). All these reasons might lead to unequal opportunities for employees.

In the Netherlands, around 50 percent of all employees work on a part-time basis, and most of them are female (Eurostat, 2015). Working part-time decreases their opportunities to reach higher positions within organizational hierarchies in a direct or indirect way (Blair-Loy, 2009; Acker, 2006). As mentioned before, many female employees, disabled employees, older employees and people seeking to enhance their work-life balance make use of part-time work possibilities, and thus might face unequal opportunities and treatments in their work environment, also in strategic leadership positions. However, these groups of employees might be attractive to include within leadership positions, to gain a more diverse workforce, to enhance productivity and creativity, to have lower absenteeism and/or to have fewer turnovers (Spencer, 2017; Sacks, Valin, Casson, & Wilson, 2015; Olmsted, 1979).

2.2 Working arrangements

In the current international labour market, the trend towards more flexibility in terms of working place and working time is noticeable (CBS, 2013; Peters, Den Dulk, & van der Lippe, 2009). Under the name of 'New Ways of Work' (NWW), much research is conducted to indicate the effects of this trend towards more flexibility. NWW can be seen as a potential source of competitive advantage, as NWW could enable organizations to respond in a more flexible way to new market requirements, to improve service quality, and to enhance operating efficiency (Peters, Poutsma, Van der Heijden, Bakker, & Bruijn, 2014). Especially working hours (Lewis, 2003), moment of working and working place (Russell et al., 2009) are diverged from traditional working arrangements within NWW practices.

The reasons for enhancing NWW practices might vary across different life stages of employees. During the start of their careers, mostly female employees make use of the possibility to work part-time, since the majority of women still do take on primary responsibility for childcare and domestic work (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005). During later stages of employees' careers, both men and women might benefit from working part-time, in order to increase their work-life balance, to combine work with leisure or caregiving tasks and to work towards their retirement (Spencer, 2017). Yet, employees are often hesitant to take advantage of NWW opportunities, fearing it will hinder their occupational advancement and it is proven that part-time employees often put in more hours than contractually agreed (Jacobs & Gerson, 2009; Williams, 2001; Blair-Loy, 2009; Berdahl & Moon, 2013).

2.3 Job sharing practices

One of the not so common NWW practices is job sharing. Job sharing is a work arrangement in which two people hold responsibility for one full-time position (Spencer, 2017, p. 80). These two people split salary, benefits and responsibility (Olmsted, 1979). The purpose of job sharing is to restructure professional positions within organizations which cannot be reduced in hours or divided by two part-time employees. Job sharing therefore requires co-operation and much communication between the sharers (Olmsted, 1979). Employees seeking job-sharing arrangements can be both men and women who want to combine paid work commitments with other responsibilities, such as family duties, school, or community activities. Besides, people suffering from health problems could reduce their working hours by making use of job sharing. When economic growth is not sufficient to provide jobs for all people who need these jobs, job sharing might also be a solution (Olmsted, 1979). In addition, the desire for more leisure and older people not ready to retire increases the number of job sharers (Spencer, 2017).

Sharing a full-time job between two people is hard to standardize, since every job requires different elements (Olmsted, 1979). However, the basic elements which need to be considered are the following:

1. Team formation: how the skills and experience of the sharers relate to each other and to the requirements of the job.
2. The division of time, tasks and earnings: how the job sharers combine their time, tasks and earnings according to the nature of the job and their personal preferences.

Job sharing could be beneficial for both the job sharers and the organization, when conditions to successfully implement job sharing practices are taken into account. However, also some drawbacks might be noticeable when jobs are shared between two persons. These benefits and drawbacks will be summarized below for both the job sharers and the organization.

2.3.1 Benefits of job sharing practices for job sharers

One of the most mentioned benefits of job sharing is the flexibility of schedule (Spencer, 2017; Olde, 1992; Olmsted, 1979). Due to greater flexibility in time, job sharers have the possibility to combine their paid work commitments with their children, school and/or other activities (Olde, 1992). Flexibility could thus increase job sharers' work-life balance, which is defined as: "Having both a fulfilling career and a satisfying family life, with a minimum of negative interaction and a maximum of positive interaction between one's roles at home and at work" (Geurts et al., 2005, p. 321-322). Olde (1992) also mentions improved health conditions, less stress and improvement of relativity and reflection, which might be benefits for the job sharers and the organization as well. Another possible benefit is that job sharing offers two different skill sets where the job sharers learn from each other (Spencer, 2017). Both individuals could focus on their personal qualities, and they could share their ideas and receive feedback in return (Spencer, 2017).

2.3.2 Benefits of job sharing practices for the organization

It is proven within literature that job sharers are more productive, have more energy on the job, have lower absenteeism, and have fewer turnovers (Spencer, 2017; Sacks et al., 2015; Olmsted, 1979). In line with an increased work-life balance for employees, having the opportunity to work part-time increases the flexibility of working hours (Olmsted, 1979), and therefore employees might feel less stressed and have better health conditions (Olde, 1992). For sectors with many female employees, job sharing could be an opportunity to fulfil the threaten shortage of female employees (Olde, 1992), since two employees might share one function. As such, job

sharing may also be a way to recruit a more diverse workforce (Olmsted, 1979), and to retain more older employees (Spencer, 2017). As such, many valued employees are retained and this leads to less hiring and training of new employees, which is cost saving (Olmsted, 1979).

2.3.3 Drawbacks of job sharing practices for job sharers

Besides the many benefits for both the job sharers and the organization, also some drawbacks could be noticeable as a result of job sharing. Olde (1992) mentions the workload for job sharers, since they might have the feeling that they need to work harder in order to fulfil their tasks in less time. Besides, because job sharers work less than full time, they might not be perceived as professionally as a full-time person or there might be resentment among other full time employees towards job sharers. Job sharers may also face slower job growth or upper mobility or may lose benefits (Spencer, 2017). As such, their career progression might be less present than for full-time employees. Job sharers need to be able to transfer their work and to coordinate well, which might be hard for them (Olde, 1992). Besides, job sharers might experience lack of fair credit for work done or toward promotion (Sacks et al., 2015).

2.3.4 Drawbacks of job sharing practices for the organization

For the organization, job sharing might increase costs in training or employee benefits (Spencer, 2017; Olde, 1992). The job sharers need to be aligned and therefore, training and a longer period of transfer is needed. Next to this, employers may want to have one person in charge, which could cause problems between the job sharers (Spencer, 2017). As a drawback for colleagues of the job sharers, it might be hard to plan appointments or meetings since the job sharers are often not available at the same time (Olde, 1992). Besides, job sharing may also create confusion or more work within the human resources department (Spencer, 2017).

2.4 Strategic leadership positions

Top executives can have a great impact on organizational outcomes, since they have to make all kind of decisions. These decisions relate to ambiguous and contradictory issues, which are influenced by different internal and external parties (Finkelstein, Hambrick, & Cannella, 2009). Top executives have to face all kinds of situations and issues, and interpret these through the lens of their experiences, values, personalities and other human characteristics. As such, looking at top executives' actions requires not only information about the outcomes of their actions, but also about their biases and other human factors (Finkelstein et al., 2009).

The term strategic leadership refers to top management of an overall enterprise, who have substantive decision-making responsibilities and deal with interpersonal and relational aspects associated with leadership (Finkelstein et al., 2009). As such, the interrelatedness of different factors greatly informs strategic leadership actions, and thus these factors are all conditions which need to be taken into account when studying strategic leadership positions. These factors are:

- Strategic factors: including all strategic choices which need to be made related to the business plan of the organization (Finkelstein et al., 2009).
- Cognitive factors: containing knowledge which is needed to be able to make strategic choices (Finkelstein et al., 2009).
- Social factors: consisting of human characteristic which are needed to function well as a managers, such as ‘managerial discretion’ or ‘being charismatic’ (Bass & Bass, 2009).
- Political factors: including all power relationships with both internal and external stakeholders (Mintzberg, 2009).

2.5 Job sharing practices within strategic leadership positions

Within the Netherlands, working on a part-time basis is rather common, since around 50 percent of all employees work part-time for less than 35 hours a week (Eurostat, 2015). Noticeably, most of these employees do not work in managerial jobs, but somewhat lower within the organizational hierarchy (SCP, 2016). This could be explained, since being a part-time manager could have some drawbacks, such as less continuity, agitation, feeling the pressure to do all the work in less time, work-life conflicts, organizational problems, and many more (Olde, 1992). These drawback seem to outweigh the benefits for the organization of having a part-time manager, such as greater productivity and efficiency (Olde, 1992).

However, keeping talented employees, including the ones who wish to work part-time within strategic leadership positions, might reduce inequality regimes. Job sharing could be a solution here, since the drawbacks of part-time strategic leadership might be erased because two employees share responsibilities of one fulltime position and the benefits of job sharing might lead to greater knowledge, broader leadership qualities, less absenteeism, greater flexibility and more diversity within the workforce (Olde, 1992). However, not every organizational design and not every organizational function seems to fit the conditions that play are role when implementing job sharing practices within strategic leadership positions. These conditions will be further investigated within this research.

2.6 Conceptual model

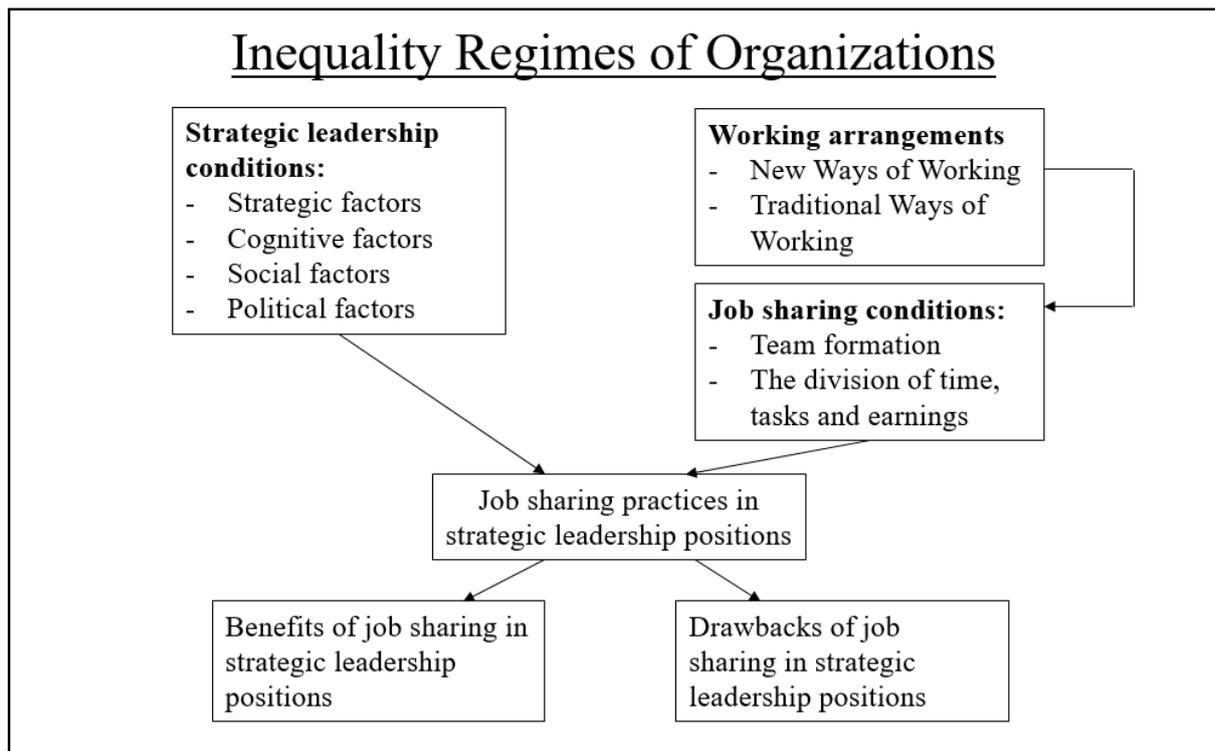


Figure 1: Conceptual model

2.7 Context of the study

This study will be conducted at the Dutch National Police, with a focus on the strategic leadership positions where a current job sharing duo will be shadowed to gain insight into their way of working. Besides, this case is chosen as context for this study, since the organization is active 24/7, to be able to provide safety to the citizens of the Netherlands. Such a constantly working organization might be hard to manage, since its employees might feel the wish to work in more flexible ways in order to meet the standard of working 24/7. Besides, the organization has a clear hierarchy, which will be elaborated within the next chapter. This makes sure that power and status are divided clearly and that pressure rests on the ones with power, contributing to the tough working conditions. As such, it might be interesting to find out how more flexibility could be introduced as working arrangement in order to make the workload more bearable and to attract a more diverse workforce, representing the diversity of the Dutch population.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research strategy

This study aims to gain insight into the benefits, drawbacks and conditions for successful job sharing practices within strategic leadership positions. Therefore, a literature study was conducted to gain more insights into the main concepts related to the research aim and to create a theoretical framework. In order to further investigate the discourses and views on benefits, drawbacks and conditions of job sharing practices within strategic leadership functions, an inductive research design was chosen (Symon & Cassell, 2012). This was done qualitatively, because qualitative research “enables to examine, understand, and explain processes, behaviours, feelings and experiences in depth” (Boeije, 2005, p. 36). The use of a practice approach was used to provide a holistic understanding of the participants’ discourses related to job sharing practices, and about their views and actions in the context of their daily tasks and job sharing practices. By combining different research methods, such as the Interview To The Double method, shadowing practices and interviews, the constructed realities of the participants were examined in multiple ways, in order to provide a complete understanding of their experience with job sharing practices. As such, insights about the associated benefits and drawbacks of job sharing practices were formulated, and conditions were examined by which the drawbacks might be minimized so that the benefits of job sharing practices were revealed.

3.2 Case description

On the national level, the Dutch National Police is led by one chief, the so-called ‘Korpsleiding’ with his staff. The Dutch National Police contains 10 regional units, one central unit, and the Police Services Centre (Politiedienstencentrum or PDC in Dutch). In total, 65,000 employees are working at the Dutch National Police. On the local level, each of the 43 districts works in a self-serving way, since every district has its own specialized staff. There are 167 basis teams within the Netherlands, working for districts linked to the regional units, who are focussed on preventing and dealing with crime within that specific region. Within the PDC, the operational management of the Dutch National Police takes place, which contains finances, facility management, information management, ICT, communication and personnel management. The PDC provides products and services according to the need of the operational colleagues working across the country (Politie, 2017).

Within this research, the focus is on job sharing duos who are managers from on the district level of the Dutch National Police. They are responsible for the whole district, and one of their daily tasks is to supervise team chefs who are responsible for the basis teams, as is made visible within Figure 2 below.

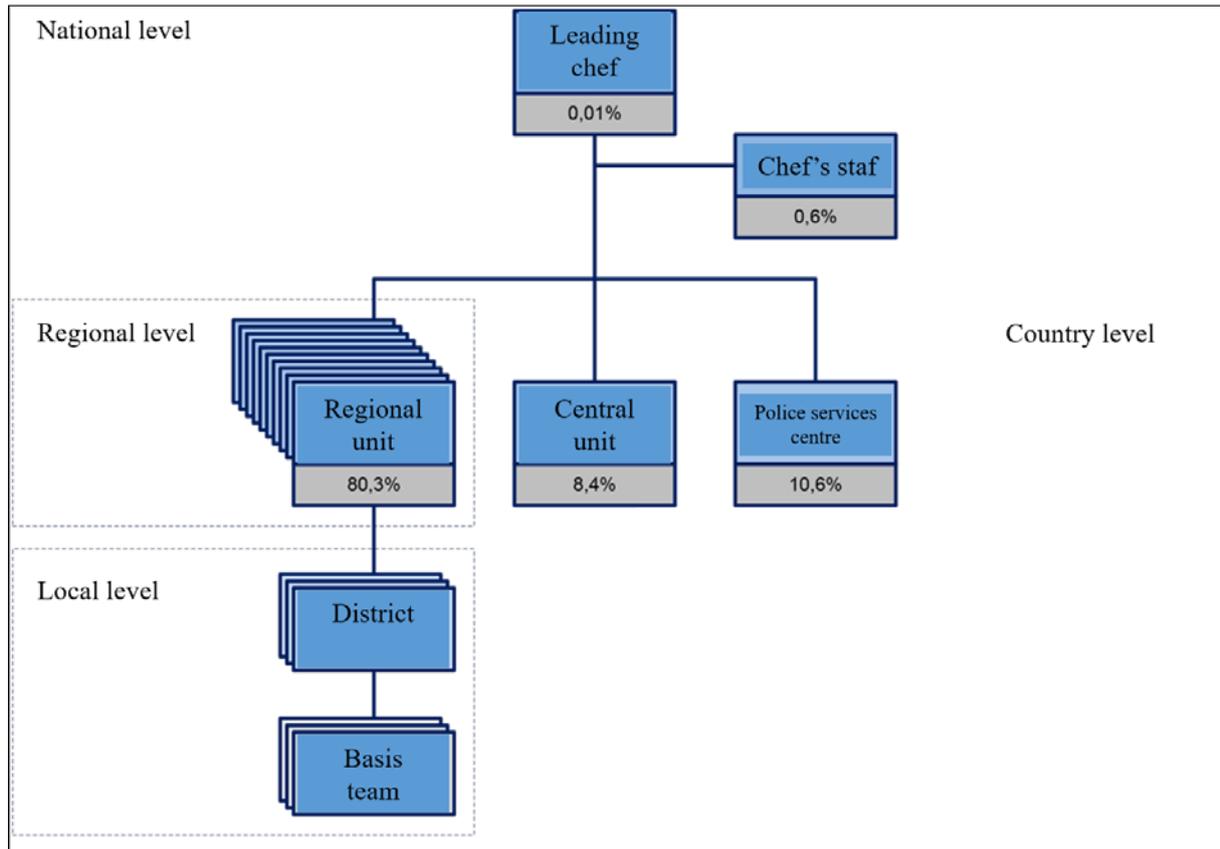


Figure 2: Organogram of the Dutch National Police

3.3 Data collection

Within this qualitative research, among other methods, the Interview To The Double (ITTD) approach, as explained by Nicolini (2009), was used to gain insights into the multifaceted and complex representation of the discourses and practices used by the objects. This means that a holistic understanding of the participants' views and actions in the context of their daily tasks and job sharing practices was provided. In this case, the objects are the job sharers at the Dutch National Police. The ITTD-approach required the participants to imagine that they have a double and that this double will take their place, without being unmasked by colleagues. The scenario was described for the participants and a single question was asked: *“Now, I want you to imagine that you are teaching this double the things they will need to know about working as a job sharer within your position. What will you tell them?”*

The intention of this technique was: “To allow participants to produce a soliloquy that creates a multifaceted representation of practice” (Nicolini, 2009, p. 196). The ITTD method had the goal to provide the researcher insight into the types of information, knowledge, and activities that the respondents value as important regarding job sharing practices (Gherardi, 2012). By asking them about their daily job sharing practices, the participants elaborated on his/her daily tasks and what he/she values as important while working as job sharer. The researcher tried to ask further where possible, in order to gain as many details about job sharing and the benefits and drawbacks of job sharing practices for the job sharers. By formulating an open question, the distancing effect made the interview less threatening and so hopefully more revealing.

Nicolini (2009) states that the researcher needs to decide whether the ITTD method will be used as a stand-alone technique, or as part of a larger ethnographic study, for instance integrated with a participant observations or interviews. The ITTDs alone would not generate enough reliable practice data, because ITTDs could be intimidating for the participants and might be hard to interpret (Gherardi, 2012). Besides, the validity of the results of ITTD as stand-alone technique would not be sufficient, since the discourses used in wordings and content by the participants could be comprehended differently by them and the researcher (Nicolini, 2009). For those reasons, this study combines the ITTD method with interviews and participant observations by using the method of shadowing. Shadowing is: “A research technique which involves a researcher closely following a member of an organisation over an extended period of time” (McDonald, 2005, p. 3). While useful for many purposes, the ITTD method is an indirect observation and the researcher faces major problems at the data level in regard to what is ‘really’ going on. The shadowing technique provides examples supporting the ITTD technique, broadens the basis of seeing normal or usual events and increases the validity of the data (Tedlock, 1991). An overview of the shadowing practices is provided in Table 1 below.

Observation number	Occasion	Focus	Durations
1	District management meeting	Both job sharers	2,5 hours
2	Working practices participant 2	Participant 2	2,5 hours
3	Team management meeting	Both job sharers	3 hours
4	Working practices participant 1	Participant 1	2,5 hours
5	External meeting with mayors	Both job sharers	2 hours

Table 1: Overview of observations

Moreover, nine interviews with colleagues of the job sharing duos and two interviews with colleague job sharing district managers were conducted in order to gain different stakeholder views of aspects related to job sharing. In this way, the opinion of team members and other job sharers' experiences were also heard and could add insights into the job sharing practices and benefits, drawbacks and conditions of job sharing practices from their points of view. These interviews were semi-structured, in order to gain in-depth insights into the descriptions of the interviewees and to interpret these as a form of prioritization by the researcher (appendix 1). The interviews were recorded and transcribed afterwards, in order to preserve the researchers' linguistic repertoire and expressions for further research. More information about the interviewees is provided in Table 2 below.

Respondent number	Formal job title	Relation to shadowed job sharing duo
1	District manager	Job sharing district manager
2	District manager	Job sharing district manager
3	Business management specialist B	HR advisor of district manager
4	Operational specialist E	Substitute of district manager
5	Chief operations	Supervisor of district manager
6	Chief operations	Supervisor of district manager
7	Chief operations	Supervisor of district manager
8	Team chef C	Subordinate of district manager
9	Team chef C	Subordinate of district manager
10	Team chef C	Subordinate of district manager
11	Team chef C	Subordinate of district manager
12	District manager	Colleague job sharing district manager from other district
13	District manager	Colleague job sharing district manager from other district

Table 2: Overview of interviewees

By combining all these methods, the researcher gained lots of information about the discursive practices and performed behaviours which were used in the job sharing roles of the participants, creating conditions that are seen as benefits or drawbacks of job sharing. Combining these research methods provided a critical view regarding all collected data, since multiple stakeholder views were taken into account.

3.4 Data analysis

In order to gain data for analysis, the first step for data analysis was to perform the ITTDs, shadowing practices and the interviews. Since all data sources were recorded or described in notes in case of the observations and interviews by telephone, these data sources were transcribed and/or elaborated. Since the analysis was based on an inductive approach, the second step was to rearrange quotations or described situations within a scheme according to the broad themes within this study, existing of *'benefits of job sharing practices for job sharers'*, *'drawbacks of job sharing practices for job sharers'*, *'benefits of job sharing practices for the organization'*, *'drawbacks of job sharing for the organization'*, and *'conditions for successfully implementing job sharing practices'*. As a third step, the coding process was performed further, by providing codes to all quotations or situations. Since this was done inductively, the codes were initially based on passages or words as derived from that particular quote or situation, so that interpretations of the researcher were as limited as possible. Fourth, all data sources were sorted and ordered in categorised codes within a coding tree (Appendix 2), so that one code covered all quotes and/or passages that described the same view on job sharing practices.

In order to provide a complete analysis of all data sources, the fifth step was to describe the analysis of the comparison within the categories of codes in Chapter 4. As a result, similarities and differences in views and discourses regarding either the benefits, drawbacks and conditions of job sharing practices came to light, which were all described within the analysis. As such, a comparison within one category between different data sources took place, in order to enhance reliability of the study. As a sixth step, also a comparison between categories of codes was performed, in order to find similarities and differences in views and discourses regarding the conditions that could possibly outweigh the drawbacks of job sharing practices, so that the benefits of job sharing practices could be revealed within Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. What stood out, was that the benefits and drawbacks of job sharing practices for the organization seem to partly overlap with the benefits and drawbacks for job sharers, which was noticeable in comparing between the categories of codes.

3.5 Research ethics

Since this study is based on a qualitative approach using in-depth and unstructured data sources, it requires some ethical considerations (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). To begin with, participants' informed consent was taken into account by providing them information about the purpose of this study, how the data will be used and how long their participation

would take. Information about the subject of this research and the duration of their participation was provided immediately after the request for participation and the information was repeated in more details right before the interview or observation started. After the data collection took place, once again the participants were informed about how their input will be used within the data analysis of this study.

Furthermore, participants' input was assured to be anonymized and confidential, right at the start of each interview and/or observation. Within this study, confidentiality was highly valued, since the Dutch National Police is always under pressure to provide safety within the Netherlands. Therefore, screening of the researcher took place before the research started and the researcher needed to sign a confidentiality statement, to make sure that all data was handled confidentially. Besides, anonymity of participants was double checked, once by the researcher while transcribing the interviews and again by the participant since the possibility to make adjustments within the interview transcripts was provided. Besides, the researcher agreed with all participants that no third parties could view the transcripts and notes of observations, except for the researcher and her supervisor. The interviews were recorded for transcription, but records were immediately deleted after the transcribing process and transcripts did only include respondent numbers and job titles and no names or other detailed information that could direct towards the respondent.

Moreover, in agreement with the job sharers, the researcher sometimes had to leave meetings when highly secured issues were discussed, to make sure that no internal information about cases would be leaked. This was done to prevent harm to the internal security of the Dutch National Police, since participants of the meetings should discuss or share some information in detail without being hindered by the presence of an outsider. As such, sensitive topics were not discussed in order to secure confidentiality of information. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, respondents had the possibility to adjust information within the transcripts in order to specify their answers or to delete or adjust things they mentioned but afterwards feel uncomfortable about. This helped to increase reliability, since the respondents helped to elucidate their answers in order to better interpret their words. This aspect is in line with the concept of credibility, meaning that the researcher tries to demonstrate a good fit between constructed realities of respondents and the reconstructions attributed to them (Symon & Cassell, 2012), which was done to provide respondents the possibility to check the transcripts of the interviews.

4. Analysis

4.1 Possible benefits of job sharing practices for job sharers

Improved work-life balance

During the ITTDs, the job sharing duo indicates to have *'more fun at work'*, since they *'enjoy each other's company and share enjoyable moments'*. Being a district manager seems to be a rather individual position according to the participating district managers and their supervisors, something which also stands out when looking at the hierarchical organogram of the organization (Figure 2). However, the job sharing duos indicate to feel less lonely when sharing this position. This also stands out during the shadowing practices, since the job sharers constantly look for each other's company and visibly laugh and talk a lot during breaks or before and after meetings. Besides, the job sharers indicate to *'feel more flexibility, since they distribute the workload'*, which they think *'improves their work-life balance'*. One job sharer indicates this as follows: *"The wish for job sharing was born out of the need to combine caregiving tasks and leisure with work responsibilities"*. This quote indicates that job sharers feel more flexible due to job sharing practices and that they are better able to combine their private tasks with work responsibilities.

When asking further about flexibility during the ITTDs, the duo states to be willing to take shifts for each other. What also happened during the shadowing practices, was that one job sharer left a meeting earlier or entered late and this did not seem to be a problem, since they shared notes afterwards or beforehand.

Personal development

While shadowing the job sharing duo, their way of providing and perceiving feedback seemed rather open and honest. During the ITTDs, the duo mentioned that job sharing practices provide them the possibility to *'openly show your vulnerabilities at work'*. According to the job sharers, this *'enhances personal development'*, is *'an opportunity to learn from each other'*, and *'increase the motivation to work'*. This was explained as follows by a job sharer: *"Now that I work together with another job sharer within the same function, I am able to develop myself further. That is because she provides feedback related to my way of working, something I did not get before. As a district manager, you are the supervisor for team chefs. I always asked them for feedback, but they did not seem comfortable providing me feedback. That changed, now we work together on the same level"*.

Also during the shadowing practices, the job sharing duo said that they became aware of their roles and the way they influence each other, due to feedback they perceived from their fellow job sharer. Besides, they mentioned that the shadowing practices helped them to be open towards each other and to provide feedback to one another, since the presence of a third person helped them to openly talk about their uncertainties. One example of this, is the noticeable change in behavior of the job sharing duo from the first observation towards the last one. During the first observation, a moment of feedback between the job sharers was helpful in showing vulnerabilities and sharing their feelings towards each other's behavior. The focus was on interventions of one job sharer during a meeting, while the other job sharer was leading this meeting. The intervening job sharer said the following about her behavior: *"It really hit me when she said she had the feeling that she needed to fill my shoes. That is how I translated it for myself. That it should be the way I did it. I really felt sorry about that, because I truly want her in this position"*. What stood out during the last observed meeting, was that the job sharers did not interrupt each other anymore, and they seemed to be more self-confident. This shows the positive result of this research, since the job sharers are aware of the added value of perceiving and providing feedback, which could be helpful in their personal development and self-confidence and could possibly be seen as a condition to successfully implement job sharing practices. The HR manager of one job sharing duo also indicates the value of this possibility of self-evaluation and feedback towards each other during the interview, which he describes as positive outcome of job sharing practices.

Accumulation of talent

What also stood out, were the moments of discussion or questions the job sharers asked each other during meetings or in preparation of meetings. Therefore, job sharing practices also seem to increase the possibility to *'spruce together'* and to *'share and discuss thoughts'*. This might have helped the job sharers to feel more confident and to come up with a broader scope of solutions or thoughts, according to multiple participants of this study. Multiple interviewees also think of *'a broader scope and influence while brainstorming together'*, which also seems to be a positive outcome of job sharing practices within their position.

The effect of learning from one another is also indicated by the job sharers themselves, since one duo consists of an experienced district manager combined with a young talent and the other duo consists of a male and female district manager. These different demographics and experience levels might be beneficial to broaden the scope of the district manager, and enhances the learning capacity of the duos, according to multiple respondents. During the ITTDs, the job

sharing duos are both aware of the accumulation of their talents, and they mention the visibility of this accumulation in their leadership styles and knowledge. Many of these effects are also noticed by interviewees, who especially mention leadership styles, power and self-confidence, since they notice that the job sharers differ in character on these point, and therefore complement each other.

4.2 Possible benefits of job sharing practices for the organization

Organizational image and diversity

Especially the supervisors of the district managers came up with specific benefits of job sharing practices for the organization, such as *'the positive expression of creativity and openness as an organization'*. According to one job sharer: *"This is particularly noticeable in the response of others. They indicate that the Police organization is less strictly following old patterns, which I think exudes a certain creative image or openness"*. This respondent indicates that since the organization provides the possibility of NWW practices, and especially of job sharing practices, this results in a more positive image for external stakeholders of the Dutch National Police.

The respondents who indicate that the Dutch National Police does not hold on to old habits, think that this *'enhances diversity and a diverse input'*. However, currently, the Dutch National Police is still a rather bureaucratic organization according to a supervisor of the job sharing duo, following traditional patterns and procedures (Politie, 2018), and this is noticeable according to multiple respondents when asking about their perception of flexibility and possibilities of NWW practices within the organization. To contribute to the diversity program, the supervisors of district managers indicate to be open to give job sharing a chance. They do this because they think job sharing practices *'provide the opportunity for young talents to reach higher leadership positions'* and to *'prevent the outflow of talents'*. In this way, experienced employees within strategic leadership functions could transfer their knowledge and experiences to young talents, which is directly noticeable when shadowing one job sharing duo, consisting of an experienced district manager and a so-called 'young talent'. Therefore, diverse job sharing duos might be a condition for reaching the benefit of more diversity within strategic leadership functions, and increases the image of the Dutch National Police as employer.

Besides, district managers who need to work less hours seem to maintain the possibility to work on strategic levels due to job sharing, which was experienced by all job sharers. This opportunity makes them *'feel more positive'* and *'work more efficiently'*, since they have the feeling that their work-life balances improve as a result of job sharing. For the organization, this might be a second opportunity to reach a more diverse workforce (Politie, 2018).

Risk reduction

One job sharer indicates the benefit of ‘*risk reduction*’, since she notices that the other job sharer differs in character and thus complements her. She says: “*If you have the same pitfalls or you as a duo need to develop the same things, then I think this is not a good match. Our strength as a duo are our differences, and thus my pitfalls are less of a risk for the organization, since the other job sharer is capable to complement me on these points*”. In this sense, job sharing practices could minimize the risks of characteristic pitfalls, since there is a second person who could compensate for these pitfalls.

Multiple respondents indicate the fact that two persons know more than one. As one job sharer concludes: “*You have to deal with two different points of view, so you can easily spruce about work*”. These job sharers have different views and different characters, so they have the opportunity to work independently on different themes or to brainstorm together, which might be a benefit of job sharing for the organization, since two people know more than one person.

4.3 Possible drawbacks of job sharing practices for job sharers

Personal sacrifices

Almost all respondents and job sharers indicate that being a job sharing duo could be hard. Having to share responsibilities and salaries are mentioned as ‘*obvious*’ consequences of job sharing by respondents and the job sharing duos themselves. However, in reality, sharing responsibilities and salaries sometimes is experienced as more difficult than expected, as mentioned during the ITTDs. The job sharers indicate that it is ‘*a big change and it takes time to get used to the new situation*’. Besides, job sharing practices seem to be a personal investment, since job sharers indicate that ‘*it costs energy and time to align tasks*’. One job sharer even says: “*In fact, in the end we [meaning himself and his fellow job sharer] worked the same or sometimes even more hours, compared to when we had a full-time contact*”. The drawback of working more hours than contracted was also mentioned by other job sharing duos, more as being a well-known drawback of part-time work in general.

Adjusting own personality

Another possible drawback of job sharing practices for the job sharers, is indicated as the experienced ‘*pressure to meet the other job sharer’s expectations of work*’, especially when the duo consists of one experienced district manager and one young talent. As the HR advisor formulates this risk: “*When people wish to stay friends, there is a risk that people lose their*

own personality. That could happen if you first look at what the other person would think about a certain subject and then say what the other person might want to hear”.

This argument was noticeable during shadowing practices, since the young talent needed to lead a meeting, and was sometimes interrupted by the experienced district manager. The young talent seemed to act less confident during the rest of the meeting, and was sometimes looking for confirmation from the experienced district manager. During the ITTDs, this subject already appeared, where the young talent mentioned to be aware of the fact that she sometimes felt pressured to not disappoint the experienced district manager, and therefore to handle according to her perceived expectations. As such, job sharing might contain the risk to feel pressured to share the same thoughts or ways of working, instead of making use of two different ways of thinking or handling.

4.4 Possible drawbacks of job sharing practices for the organization

Organizational costs

For the organization, costs seem to be higher for job sharers, according to multiple respondents. They indicate double costs of employee benefits, such as two company cars, telephones and tablets. Besides, one supervisor of the district manager states the following: *“When looking at the business-side of job sharing, one could say that we need more people to arrange the same functionality. And that is more costly for the organization”*. This summarizes what was indicated by multiple supervisors, as they also seem to worry about the costs of transfer of work and the extra work hours as part of job sharing practices.

Inefficiency

An often mentioned point by subordinates of the job sharing duos is the inefficiency of job sharing practices. Many of them state to notice both district managers present during meetings, and wonder if this is the most efficient option to do, when looking at the double costs of salaries and time efficiency of the job sharers. One subordinate says: *“The thing I see them doing, is for instance that they are both present during internal and external meetings. Sometimes I wonder whether it is really necessary to be both present. However, I also understand that such moments are necessary to stay in contact with their networks”*.

The way participants think about inefficiency related to job sharing practices also becomes clear during an shadowing practice, where I was introduced as an observer of the job sharing duo. This meeting started with an introduction moment where I had the opportunity to get to know the attendees. One attendee made the following comment: *‘I am efficiently present*

by myself, while introducing himself. With this comment, he seemed to hint at the inefficiency of job sharing practices, which was also more often mentioned during the interviews. This efficiency argument was also provided by the HR advisor, who said that job sharers should always focus on the most efficient way of working.

Ambiguity for colleagues

What also seems to matter for subordinates of job sharers, is the ambiguity they might experience due to distribution of tasks and responsibilities. The HR advisor explains why this is an issue: *“If tasks are distributed, the subordinates of the district manager could feel like they have to think about who to contact for each question they have, since they are not both responsible for all areas anymore”*.

This was mentioned as a possible drawback for the organization, more than an actual occurring drawback, since the district managers divided the district in two parts and are each responsible for half of the district. This was communicated clearly, so that colleagues know who is the contact person for each service. However, this division of responsibilities could eventually lead to a division within the district, as noted by a subordinate of the district managers. This might be a drawback of job sharing practices, and especially of the division of tasks between job sharers.

Organizational design

What respondents also mentioned as drawback of job sharing practices, was that the substitute of the district manager could get the feeling to be put offside. They indicate that this is because the district manager now has another partner to brainstorm with and to provide and perceive feedback from, instead to do this with their substitute as was usual before the introduction of job sharing practices. This was not mentioned as drawback by the substitute himself, however other respondents noticed this as point of attention.

4.5 Possible conditions to successfully implement job sharing practices

Organizational conditions

According to multiple participants of this study, one broadly formulated condition for the organization in order to support job sharing practices, is to be a progressive organization. Multiple respondents indicate that the Dutch National Police is *‘originally a traditional organization, where innovation and changes happen very slowly’*. According to one job sharer, this also becomes clear when looking at the reorganization which started in 2011, and is still

not fully implemented. However, the recently formulated goals of the Dutch National Police focus on a more diverse and inclusive future (Politie, 2018), and multiple respondents indicate the importance of progression, to become a more *'modern organization'*. The respondents state that job sharing practices might be a solution to become a modern organization, since this could be a way to *'reach diversity norms and to distribute work pressure within a 24/7 organization'*. The job sharing duos indicate as condition *'the need of trust and support from supervisors while performing job sharing practices'*, and therefore, it seems to be necessary that supervisors are willing to give job sharing practices a chance. On job sharer states: *"Supervisors of job sharers should accept that things might be handled differently than before, but that the job sharers take their responsibility and figure it out themselves"*. Furthermore, in order to support job sharing practices as an organization, *'offering the possibility of coaching sessions'* might be helpful, according to multiple job sharers.

However, not every organizational climate seems to be positively linked to job sharing practices, depending on both internal and external factors as noticed by the supervisors of the job sharing duos. He explains this as follows: *"Internal processes are the internal activities, external processes are the external stakeholders with which the function has to deal. These processes are both important factors, because they both require continuity in a function, which is sometimes difficult to achieve while job sharing. It is therefore necessary to see whether the internal processes have a not too divergent diversity, something which I experienced within the DROS [service for regional operational cooperation] where I supervised the job sharing district managers. This is a complicated service where many national consultations take place. If someone [the job sharer] misses many meetings as a result of job sharing practices, since he or she cannot be present every meeting, it can happen that this person becomes insecure and therefore does not represent the service properly"*. This is how he indicates that internal processes for which the district manager is responsible should not consist of too many diverse services, since these might be hard to align when divided between two job sharers.

When interviewing both job sharers about their experiences with job sharing practices within the DROS, they indicated that alignment missed between the different internal services, since these services were divided related to the responsible job sharer. Besides, pressure did also arise from external factors, since they experienced it to be hard to align all work where the job sharers had to deal with many external stakeholders, as was also described above by their supervisor. The job sharers experienced it as hard to transfer all intangible or undocumented information to one another, and it also felt difficult to coordinate external meetings, as the supervisor and job sharing duo indicates. Therefore, internal and external conditions seem

necessary to be stable over time and should not involve too diverse activities and too many stakeholders.

Personal conditions

One of the most often mentioned conditions to become a successful job sharer, is indicated by the job sharing duos and by multiple respondents as follows: “*You should be willing to be a job sharer*”. According to the job sharers, this takes courage, since it seems necessary to ‘*open up towards each other to provide and perceive feedback*’, and therefore ‘*trusting your fellow job sharer is important, since you should reach goals as a duo*’. Besides, power issues could play a role, since job sharers could be of different ages and/or levels of experience. As such, more experienced district managers who start job sharing practices should consider whether they are able and willing to give space and responsibility to their fellow job sharer. Consequently, it seems to help to get to know each other before starting as job sharing duo.

Furthermore, almost all respondents indicate the importance of ‘*a personal and professional match between the job sharers*’, meaning that the job sharers should have the same ideas about police work. To reach this, a well-organized preparation is a condition for the success of job sharing practices, since the job sharers should ‘*invest in getting to know each other’s character*’. According to the HR advisor and supervisors of the job sharing duos, a good match between the job sharers might consist of two completely different characters who could complement each other, but also have the same ideas and work styles. This might enhance consistency in their way of working, and could make it easier to transfer work.

Besides, the respondents indicate the need of ‘*a clear and well-communicated division of tasks and responsibilities*’ and ‘*consistency in their way of working and communicating*’. They think this is necessary, to prevent subordinates to go ‘*shopping for the best answer*’ among the job sharers. Therefore, a high-valued condition for successful job sharing practices seems to be clear communication, both between the job sharers and from the job sharers towards subordinates.

5. Conclusion and discussion

5.1 Conclusion

The point of departure for this study was the need for practical insights into experiences of job sharing practices within strategic leadership positions, since the limited existing insights regarding job sharing practices were particularly theoretical and not specified regarding specific organizational positions. It extends previous work on job sharing, since this study focuses on strategic leadership positions by using a practice approach. The aim of this study is to gain insight into the possible benefits, drawbacks and conditions of job sharing practices within strategic leadership positions, focusing on both the job sharer and the organization. Within this section, an answer to the research question will be formulated. This research question is the following:

What are possible benefits, drawbacks and conditions of job sharing practices within strategic leadership positions for both job sharers and the organization?

In order to show how the possible drawbacks of job sharing practices within strategic leadership positions could be minimized, this Conclusion tries to merge the drawbacks of job sharing practices with the conditions that could possibly reveal the potentials of job sharing practices.

Willingness to be a duo

For the job sharers themselves, job sharing practices might be a personal sacrifice, meaning that it costs energy and time to align responsibilities, employee benefits and responsibilities need to be shared with another person, and job sharers could feel pressured to meet the other job sharer's expectations. Therefore, respondents indicated that it is a necessary condition for successfully implementing job sharing practices that job sharers are willing to open up towards one another, and that they learn to trust each other. To do this, a condition is that they invest in getting to know each other's personality, to see whether there is a personal and/or professional match. A good match could be that they work in the same way and that they like each other's personality, however, it is also indicated to be important they are also substantially different so that they could learn from one another. Consequently, the benefit of accumulating their talents comes to light due to job sharing practices.

As a result of a match between job sharers, an organizational benefit of job sharing is mentioned to be risk reduction, since job sharers could complement each other. As two persons generally know more than one person, it seems plausible that job sharing practices contain the benefit of the accumulation of two persons' knowledge and experience within one function.

Furthermore, if job sharers open up towards each other, also the benefit of personal development as a result of the possibility to share vulnerabilities between job sharers could come to light. If job sharers provide and perceive feedback towards each other, this is indicated as a way to learn from one another and this could enhance job sharers' productivity as such.

Organizational image

An organizational drawback of job sharing practices within strategic leadership positions could be indicated as inefficiency, since double costs of employee benefits and extra working hours are indicated. Therefore, important conditions that could minimize these drawbacks seem to be that the organization is willing to invest to be progressive and open towards New Ways of Working, in line with the wish to attract a more diverse workforce within the Dutch National Police, which could eventually be a positive outcome of job sharing practices.

It seems likely that a change in organizational culture and structure is necessary in order to fully support job sharing practices, since support is indicated as one of the key conditions for successfully implementing job sharing practices within strategic leadership positions. This entails support for coaching sessions for the job sharers where they can provide and perceive feedback from each other, and time and space to get job sharing implemented. To gain trust from supervisors, it seems to be beneficial if at least one job sharer gained experience within the function, to increase goodwill and confidence from supervisors.

If trust, support, time and space to implement job sharing practices are provided to job sharers, this shows a rather creative and new way of working, which is in line with the preferred image of the Dutch National Police. Besides, if job sharing practices are more often implemented within strategic leadership functions, this is positive for the Dutch National Police as image of a progressive employer, focussing on solving diversity issues. The organization strives for a more diverse workforce, and providing employees the possibility to make use of job sharing practices can be a way to reach this goal. Besides, participants of this study think that the outflow of talent at strategic levels might be prevented due to job sharing practices, since employees within different life stages who prefer to work part-time, might have the opportunity to continue working at strategic level.

Communication

Another possible organizational drawback of job sharing practices is the ambiguity that could occur, since it might be unclear for colleagues of job sharers if and how they divided tasks and responsibilities. Therefore, a condition to minimize this risk is that division of tasks is documented and communicated clearly towards colleagues, so that there is consistency between job sharers' way of working and communicating. As such, ambiguities could be prevented, and job sharers could actually gain more flexibility due to job sharing practices. Consequently, job sharers within strategic leadership positions could experience an improvement of their work-life balance, since they can divide work.

What also stood out was job sharers' enhanced work satisfaction, since working together is experienced as more fun than working alone in the function of district manager. Enhanced work-life balance and improved job satisfaction might both have a positive influence on job sharers' motivation to work and consequently their productivity, which could be linked to the benefits of job sharing practices for the organization.

Organizational design

If job sharing practices are applied within the role of district manager, this means that the job sharers have the possibility to brainstorm and spruce together, even though this was originally designed to happen with their substitute. This does not automatically have to be a drawback, but could be seen as benefit of job sharing practices under the condition that the organizational design allows to, because the accumulation of talents could mean that another viewpoint is added to the brainstorm sessions between the district manager and its' substitute. This factor could be seen as benefit of job sharing practices for the organization, since a more diverse strategic level could create a more diverse input, which is one of the organizational goals of the Dutch National Police in order to better match the societal diversity of the Netherlands.

Besides, if internal and external processes related to the job sharers' function are experienced as too diverse, job sharing practices make sure that work is hard to align. According to the participants of this study, an organizational conditions therefore is that the organizational design does not consist of too diverse activities and stakeholders, and too much pressure on the position is not beneficial for successfully implementing job sharing practices.

To conclude, job sharing practices could be beneficial for both the job sharers and the organization, if above described conditions are acted upon in order to minimize the possible drawbacks of job sharing practices. These insights are visualized in Figure 3 below.

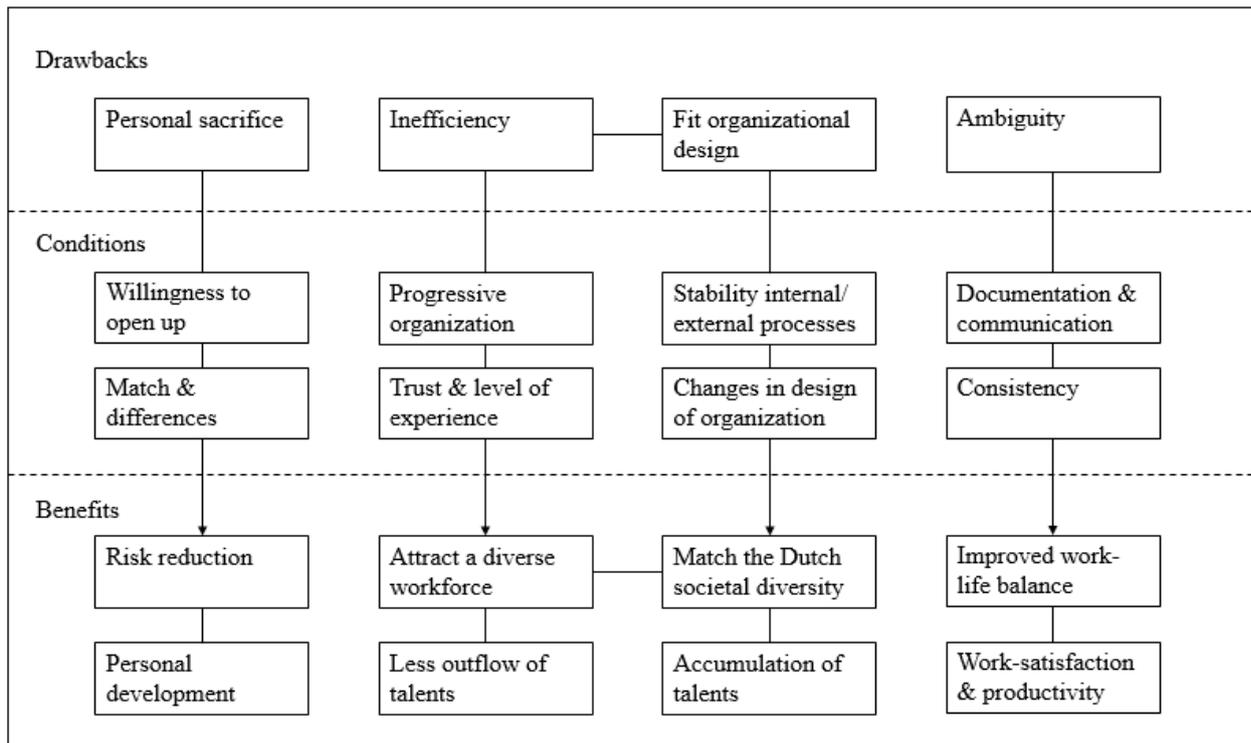


Figure 3: Schematic overview of conclusions

5.2 Limitations and further research

This study contributes to the job sharing literature, however, also some limitations need to be taken into account. Even though the researcher experienced saturation in the sense that many respondents indicated the same benefits and drawbacks of job sharing practices, the limited amount of in-depth interviews might count as restriction of the research quality. Another implication of this study is the rather short-term involvement within practice. The shadowing practices took place during several meetings, however only a total amount of 12,5 hours of observations have been performed. In order to enhance validity of the outcomes, an intensive, long-term involvement might be preferred within future research, since “long-term participant observation provides more complete data about specific situations and events than any other method” (Maxwell, 2008, p. 244).

Even though this study provides all findings as clear as possible and without the most common assumptions of the researcher, by providing respondents the possibility to check their interview transcripts, it needs to be said that the researchers’ own assumptions and biases could have played a role in the analysis of the answers of the interviewees. Preventing this was done by explicitly explaining what would happen to respondents’ answers, by insuring anonymity and confidentiality and by making it possible for the interviewees to check their answers before the analysis started, to ensure member validation (Ritchie et al., 2003). Besides, it might be

possible that interviewees did not feel comfortable enough to be open about drawbacks of job sharing practices, since their supervisors are the job sharers and they selected participants for this study. Therefore, the interviewees could have experienced pressure to respond in a socially desirable way related to job sharing practices.

The use of the ITTD technique has merit within this research, because it allows practitioners to turn into observers of their own work practices, which makes them describe their experiences with job sharing (Nicolini, 2009). Combined with observations, the researcher empirically captured the benefits, drawbacks and conditions that play a role within job sharing practices. Having indicated the advantages of the ITTD and shadowing method, it is also important to indicate that there were some limitations. First, the ITTD method and shadowing method both could feel rather intimidating for the participants, since their work is critically evaluated. The possibility exists that participants feel pressured to act in a socially desirable way, which might not provide their actual view on reality. Therefore, these methods should be prepared well in future research, by formulating some follow-up questions in case of the ITTD method and by getting to know the participants well before shadowing them, in order to gain as much valuable information and to prevent them from formulating socially desirable answers.

Besides, this research tried to demonstrate the whole research process as clear as possible, following a step-by-step approach within Chapter 3. However, it should be noted that the formulation of themes and categories during the analysis of data could have created analytic blinders (Maxwell, 2008), which prevented the researcher from seeing alternative ways of understanding the data. In order to prevent the creation of analytical blinders, the researcher started with many categories consisting of description of participants' concepts and beliefs, to prevent linkages of categories which are in fact slightly different. This was particularly important for descriptions of interviewees that did not fit into the existing categories, in order to prevent wrong interpretations of these descriptions or the loss of their meanings. Therefore, future research could incorporate a second possibility for participants in the study or colleague researchers to check the interpretations of the researcher from the data sources.

Furthermore, further research could take into account a broader context, for instance by investigating multiple professional functions or diverse industries. In this way, insights into the benefits, drawbacks and conditions of job sharing practices might be broader formulated related to different industries and professional functions. As a result, these broader insights into conditions regarding job sharing practices could be valuable while implementing job sharing practices, so that drawbacks could be minimized across various industries and professional functions, so that the benefits could broadly be revealed.

5.3 Implications for practice

More understanding of the benefits, drawbacks and conditions of job sharing could help organizations to design and implement job sharing practices in a better way, if specific conditions are sketched to minimize the drawbacks of job sharing practices, as was schematically visualized in Figure 3. These insights could be helpful regarding strategic leadership positions within the Dutch National Police, but transferability of job sharing practices to other 24/7 organizations, such as healthcare organizations or security institutions, is also possible. Since details are provided about the case organization within this study, other organizations could make use of the outcomes of this study by deciding if the conditions could be used in their specific organizational context as well in order to minimize the drawbacks of job sharing practices. Since the 24/7 character, the strict bureaucracy and power-relations are rather specific to the Dutch National Police, this is an important aspect of external validity to take into account while reading the conclusions of this study, especially when transferring these insights towards different industries.

Furthermore, it might be hard to transform the conditions to successfully implement job sharing within practice, since these conditions are examined but this study does not provide a clear overview of steps to actually implement a job sharing policy within the Dutch National Police. Therefore, the insights into conditions to successfully implement job sharing practices within strategic leadership positions could only be used as the starting point for a job sharing policy for instance. Future research could further describe the implementation process of job sharing practices.

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Appendix 1: Interview guide

Interview protocol

The research focus is on:

- The interviews deliver input for analyses of the benefits and drawbacks of job sharing practices for both the organization and the job sharers, according to different stakeholders. The themes are leading during the interview. The specific topics can be used as interview questions if the topic is not mentioned in answer of the respondent.
- The grey column contains the central concepts from a theoretical point of view. It also contains the aim of the questions.

Introduction

Before starting the interview, I would like to thank you for your time and effort. To introduce myself: I am a master student of the Master Business Administration at the Radboud University of Nijmegen. Currently, I am writing my master thesis as final research, with which I hope to finish my second master's program within Business Administration.

The interview will take approximately one hour and if you do not have any objections, I would like to record the interview. I will transcribe the interview and anonymize them, so that I can analyze the interviews and make use of the outcomes within my research.

After transcribing the interview, you will have the opportunity to check the transcript. The transcripts are confidentially used, thus these are not available for third parties. The results of this research could be used for scientific publications, however anonymity will be guaranteed.

Within this research, the focus is on job sharing practices within strategic management functions. In short, job sharing is a work arrangement in which two people hold responsibility for one full-time position. I investigate this within the Dutch National Police, as the organization contains multiple duos who enhance the concept of job sharing, and because of the interesting 24/7 character of the organization where flexible work arrangements might be valuable. To improve the performance of job sharing practices for both the duo's and the organization, your insights might be very valuable.

Do you have any questions before we start?

Interview questions

Theme 1: Background information

Questions	Comment
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your formal job title? 2. Could you shortly describe your daily tasks? 3. How many hours per week do you work? 4. Do you have the opportunity to work according to flexible working arrangements? 5. In what ways are you confronted by working in a 24/7 active organizations? 	<p>These questions are asked for background information, and to get an overview of the respondent and his/her professional situation.</p>

Theme 2: Job sharing duo

Questions	Comment
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In what way does your job relate to the job sharing duo? 2. What changes did you notice since the start of the job sharing duo in January? 3. What is your experience with the job sharing duo within your organization? 4. How do you experience the functionality of job sharing? 5. What do you experience as positive aspects of job sharing? 6. What do you experience as negative aspects of job sharing? 7. Do you know other job sharing duos and how do you experience their work? 8. Could you think of necessary conditions to make job sharing successful? 	<p>These questions are asked to gain insights into the opinion of the respondent regarding job sharing.</p>

Theme 3: Job sharing improvements

Questions	Comment
1. In what way do you think the job sharing activities could be improved by the job sharing duo? 2. In what way do you think the job sharing activities could be improved by the organization? 3. In what way do you think the job sharing activities could be improved by colleagues of the job sharers?	These questions are asked to gain insights into the possible improvements for the job sharing duo.

This is the end of the interview. Are there any subjects which were not adressed in the interview, which you still like to discuss?

I would like to stress that all information provided during interview will be dealt with anonymously. I only ask for your contact details so that I can send you the interview transcript. I would like to thank you very much for your cooperation and the time you made available for participation.

<p>Duration of interview:</p> <p>Contact details:</p> <p>Observations:</p>

Appendix 2: Coding tree

Themes	Codes	Categories
Benefits of job sharing practices for job sharers	Fun at work	Improved work-life balance
	Flexibility	
	Improved work-life balance	
	Distribution of workload	
	Showing vulnerabilities at work	Personal development
	Personal development	
	Sharing and discussing thoughts	
	Sprucing together	Accumulation of talent
	Increasing motivation to work	<i>Result of all above</i>
Benefits of job sharing practices for organization	Expression of creativity and openness	Organizational image and diversity
	Enhancing diversity	
	Opportunities for young talents	
	Preventing outflow of talents	
	Risk reduction	Risk reduction
	2 persons know more than 1	
	Positive / motivated employees	<i>Result of all above</i>
	Efficient employees	
Drawbacks of job sharing practices for job sharers	Splitting salaries	Personal sacrifices
	Splitting responsibilities	
	Coordination costs energy	
	Losing your own personality	Adjusting own personality

	Complementing / taking over each other	
	Feeling pressured to meet other job sharer's expectations	
Drawbacks of job sharing practices for organization	Double employee benefits	Organizational costs
	Coordination takes times	
	Costs	
	Ambiguity for colleagues	Ambiguity for colleagues
	Division within the district due to division of responsibilities	Organizational design
	Role of substitute	
	Inefficiency	<i>Result of all above</i>
Conditions	Progressive organization	Organizational conditions
	Trust and support from supervisors	
	Coaching sessions	
	Limited diversity in internal and external processes	
	Willingness to be a duo	Personal conditions
	Courage to be open towards each other	
	Trusting each other	
	Personal and professional match	
	Clear and well-communicated division of tasks and responsibilities	
	Consistency in way of working and communicating	

Appendix 3: Research Integrity Form – Master Thesis

Name: Esmee de Rover	Student number: 4203550
RU e-mail address: esmee.rover@student.ru.nl	Master specialisation: Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Management

Thesis title: Job Sharing in Strategic Leadership Positions
Brief description of the study: This report provides the benefits, drawbacks and conditions of job sharing in strategic leadership positions, for both the job sharers and the organization.

It is my responsibility to follow the university's code of academic integrity and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of my study. This includes:

- providing original work or proper use of references;
- providing appropriate information to all involved in my study;
- requesting informed consent from participants;
- transparency in the way data is processed and represented;
- ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data;

If there is any significant change in the question, design or conduct over the course of the research, I will complete another Research Integrity Form.

Breaches of the code of conduct with respect to academic integrity (as described / referred to in the thesis handbook) should and will be forwarded to the examination board. Acting contrary to the code of conduct can result in declaring the thesis invalid.

Student's Signature: _____ **Date:** 18-06-2018

To be signed by supervisor I have instructed the student about ethical issues related to their specific study. I hereby declare that I will challenge him / her on ethical aspects through their investigation and to act on any violations that I may encounter.

Supervisor's Signature: _____ **Date:**