



IJEAST

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF ENGINEERING APPLIED SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY



VOLUME : 7 ISSUE : 05 Print / Issue Publication Date: 06-Nov-2022



ISSN : 2455-2143



DOI : 10.33564/IJEAST.2022.v07i05.026

Indexed In



WWW.IJEAST.COM

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FLEXI WORK ARRANGEMENTS INFLUENCE ON WORKPLACE PRODUCTIVITY: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

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Abstract: Purpose: The Flexi work arrangements (FWAs) is one of those solutions that can bring lot of changes in workplace and style of working pattern.

Methodology: The main purpose of descriptive review-based survey, describe an existing phenomenon of flexi work arrangements (FWAs). For this study as universe and population was selected on the based on previous studies of the High performing work organisation where leaders are taking decision on flexi work arrangements.

Findings and Results: This research aimed regarding flexible work arrangements, how much the employees are aware of flexible working arrangements and how flexible work arrangements policies have impact on job satisfaction and such policies help in minimizing the level of stress improving productivity and performance of employees.

Implications: The researchers showed that organization providing FWAS will retain potential employees and promotes work life balance that will attract potential candidates. It also empowers gender equality as well boost morale of employees.

Key Words: Flexi Work Arrangements (FWAs), Work Performance, Job Satisfaction, Productivity, and Barriers.

I. INTRODUCTION

PRESENT SCENARIO OF FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

Recent trends in the availability of flexible working arrangements (FWAs) have seen an increase in flexibility in the workplace. With contemporary developments in information and communication technology (ICT), many employees can work anytime (e.g., flexible working hours) and from anywhere (e.g., working from home). In addition, legislative and organizational changes in country have also increased opportunities for employees to take advantage of Flexible Work Arrangements. This trend in organizations has significant implications for the working lives of individuals and teams and for organizational effectiveness.

There have been dramatic changes in workforce demographics over the past few decades. Women comprise nearly half of the labour force, more employees are from “dual-earner” families, and adults are more likely to pursue further education. These changes have increased employee demands for more flexibility in the workplace so that they can better balance work and life. Flex- time, compressed workweek, working from home, job sharing, and reduced work hours have been increasingly implemented by employers as responses to the conflicts between employees’ work and personal life. Flexible working can also help to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity, employees’ commitment, and loyalty.

As per the previous survey by looking at the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)’s Labour Force Survey. & #39;Long working hours' is now the 7th most common cause of work-related stress compared to being 1st in 2018. Highlighting that many workplaces have become aware of the impacts on workforces and reduced the problem. Employees’ who work time is flexible often have a greater sense of responsibility, ownership, and control over their working life. If a manager helps an employee to balance his work life and home life this will increase loyalty and commitment of the employees’. An employee may feel more able to concentration on his work and to develop his career. Result of various research showed that productivity improved with flexi work arrangements. Flexjobs’ recent survey suggests that 76% of US workers would be more willing to stay with their current employer if they could work flexible hours. Employees when given opportunity to choose their own work time, letting them work on their best productive hours. Flexible work hours allow for a better work-life balance and greater employee satisfaction. The need for same time availability is getting reduced. No wonder, 69% of millennials said they would give up other work benefits for a more flexible working space in a CBRE survey. To make this work, organizations must incorporate responsible flexibility in their culture.



CONCEPT OF FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

According to (Bal & De Lange, 2014) flexibility in the workplace has been defined as “the opportunity of workers to make choices influencing when, where, and for how long they engage in work-related tasks” Despite the growth of FWAs in many organisations, and the benefits extolled by academic studies, the reality is that in many situations employees and organisations are dissatisfied with their experiences and the outcomes (Ryan & Kossek, 2008).

Managers are unsure how to put flexible policies into practice and believe that they will have difficulties supervising flexible workers and managing their performance (Van Dyne, Kossek & Lobel, 2007).

WHAT IS FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENT?

The concept of ‘flexible working arrangements’ it means employees who, to some extent, work in different locations or non-traditional working hours. This includes:

Flexitime: where employees can vary their start and finish times provided a certain number of hours are worked. The number of hours may be set weekly or monthly and core working hours, such as 10.00am to 4.00pm may be set.
Part-time or reduced hours: where the employee works fewer hours than a full- time worker who usually works 35 hours or more a week.
Term-time working where an employee only works during school term time. This means working around 13 weeks less per year.
Home working: where the employee works from home or another location away from the central office one or more days per week.
Job sharing where two employees share the work of one full time job.
Compressed hours: where employees work a full week’s worth of hours in fewer days (e.g., five days worked over four).
Family-leave programmes: where employees get paid or unpaid leave to attend to personal or family responsibilities usually for a temporary period.

A distinction is often made between time flexibility in which there is flexibility when work is completed, versus location flexibility, in which there is flexibility where work is completed. However, flexible working can be extended to give employees much greater control over other aspects of their work schedules, including when to take a break, when to take holiday or a day off, distribution of work days across the week, and whether and when overtime is worked.

RATIONALE:

Organizations and individuals may benefit from the development and utilization of flexi work arrangements behaviours attributed can enhance in productivity outcomes. The practical application becomes a strategy for the implementation in flexi arrangement of work that will improve organization's ability to assess the impact and consequences of policies and practices. The overall problem that formed the basis of this research, researchers have examined the effects of flexi arrangement on employer productivity and performance. Additionally, few of the studies that considered research that have examined the effects of flexi work on productivity. Without having a clear understanding of how failed organizations affect HRD knowledge, any plans to improve organizations, processes, and individual performance could quickly become susceptible to criticism (Swanson & Holton, 2008).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To identify the various flexi work arrangements (FWAs) within selected organizations.
- To identify the factors affecting flexi work arrangements issues that affect employee productivity.
- To identify the managers perception regarding FWAs.
- To examine the motives for flexible work arrangements, use, outcomes, and tendencies.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

It aims to give the work plan of research, it provides training in choosing methods materials, scientific tools. Research design is a conceptual structure of the research project. It is the arrangement of condition and analyze of data in a manner that aims to combine relevant to that research project. The study will be descriptive in nature. The main purpose of descriptive survey, collect detailed and information that describe an existing phenomenon of flexi work arrangements (FWAs). The study will be divided into various stages, such as methods of data collection, selection of sample size and data analysis and interpretation. For this study as universe and population was selected on the based on previous studies and various reports were studied of the High performing work organisation where leaders are taking decision on flexi work arrangements. From the population, sample size will be selected based on the High performing work organisation where leaders taking decision on flexi work arrangements policies are practice



and only those organisations had been studied that reflected improvement in productivity through FWAs.

The factors affecting the determination of the factors and motives of FWAs in terms of outcomes. While studying all reports and articles it is identified about different issues and problems facing by employees in the organizations like employees monitoring, their work life balance, training, etc. These factors affect the organization in great way because organization performance greatly relates with employee performance. This research is identifying those Factors which affect the performance and productivity of employees majorly through flexi work arrangements.

III. DATA COLLECTED AND ANALYSED:

Believe it or not, the majority (55%) of British office workers are still required by employers to work from the office within designated working hours. This is despite the government passing legislation stating that all UK workers have the right to request flexible working. According to a study by Microsoft, more than two in five (44%) surveyed British workers are not allowed to work remotely under any circumstances. This is despite a CBRE survey of 2021 proving that British employees could save a whopping £3.8bn and 533 million hours a year in commuting time if they adopted flexible working. Now more than ever, business leaders need to get over the notion that work can only happen in the office. Employers need to embrace flexible working to give employees the right kind of environment to be productive anytime, anywhere.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS:

Flexible work arrangements improve productivity.

Right technology

The true benefits of flexible working can only be reaped by having the right technology. Investing in the right technology doesn't have to be costly, especially with cloud-based subscription models from Microsoft. Most small businesses who take the time to choose the right IT see big benefits that outweigh investments. From tending to customer needs to collaborating with colleagues, the right flexible working technologies directly contribute to the success and performance of an employee and the business.

Niki Daly, co-founder, Gnot and Helmi's Beauty, reckons the right technology is a wise investment for all small businesses.

She said: **"I am truly empowered in every way, using the latest technology to connect and grow my business, whilst still managing the complexity of home and work life. Making investment decisions is hard for any business but this is one I recommend wholeheartedly. I have cutting edge tools that will always stay current and grow with my business – wherever that may lead. You can't put a price on that!"**

The tools that make flexible working effective include, be it multiple team members working on a document simultaneously with One Drive for Business or attending business meetings remotely with Skype for Business.

Managing Trust issues

To make flexible working work, you need to trust employees. The true benefits of flexible working can only be achieved when you set out goals for your employees and trust them to achieve it. According to a study commissioned by Microsoft to explore attitudes of 1,500 full-time or part-time employees in office-based roles in 15 European countries, only 52% of respondents said they fully trust their colleagues to work productively away from the office.

According to Microsoft's chief envisioning officer Dave Coplin.

He said: **"If you've set goals for your employees, you need to trust them to achieve it. When that trust exists, the employee feels free to make an informed decision about when and where he/she will be most productive. If trust doesn't exist, you end up in a horrible place of presentism. This drives people to over-communicate and over-compensate for not being in the office."**

The flexible workers start getting up early in the morning and send everyone in the team a bunch of emails to prove that even though they aren't in the office, they're still working.

Positive Attitudes towards flexible working

The other hurdle that organisations face while adopting flexible working is resentment among colleagues.

According to research by the Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM), almost a third (31%) of managers have heard colleagues make derogatory remarks about flexible workers, while almost half (48%) say that allowing some people to work flexibly causes resentment within teams. Also, 15% say they have personally felt resentment towards colleagues working flexibly.

Coplin reckons a change in attitudes towards flexible working will overcome this barrier. He said: **"In a world where flexible working isn't a strategic objective, everyone perceives they have a different package."**

"Flexible working is really about giving your employees the power to choose how they do their work in the most productive manner." **"Clear communication, transparency and establishing clear policies will help change negative attitudes towards flexible working."**

Job Security concerns

Flexible working is all about the freedom to work productively from anytime, anywhere. However, this brings security issues with it. What if you lose your phone or your tablet gets stolen? According to research by Microsoft, 61% of employees mix personal and work tasks on their device. This means your sensitive business data is mobile. With the



right technology, you can be confident your sensitive business data is safe with your remote workers wherever they are, whatever the circumstances.

Keeping on top of customer service

Two in five (41%) British workers are worried that flexible working could cause problems with customer service, research by the ILM has highlighted. This is a myth that might hold back employers from adopting flexible working. There are reams of research that prove that flexible working actually helps in providing better customer service. In the Microsoft and London Loves Business e-guide, **“business anywhere – The ultimate guide to flexible working”** Coplin pointed out that flexible working helps you spend more time with your customers, partners or colleagues. He wrote: “Many of us find it easier to say, “Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm, I’m going to be sitting in my office”. But, with the right culture and tools, why can’t we work from our customers’ premises or anywhere? We should be more connected to our customers and interact with them – flexible working can make that happen.”

Better work-life balance

The perception that flexible working disrupts work-life balance is ludicrous. According to research by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, over 50% of employees feel that flexible working helps them achieve a better work-life balance. Coplin thinks that to make flexible working successful, employers need to stop treating flexible working like it’s an “employee perk”. “Flexible working should not be something that an individual invokes with the HR department because they’ve got issues like childcare, for example,” he said. “Flexible working is a strategic operational opportunity for an organisation. It increases productivity of its employees and gives them a much better way of controlling their lives. “This shift in the culture and perception of remote workers in an organisation will help employers and employees make the most of flexible working.”

MANAGERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF FWAS

Kossek, E.E., Ollier-Malaterre, A., Lee, M.D., Pichler, S., and Hall, D.T. (2016) in ‘Line managers’ rationales for professionals’ reduced-load work in embracing and ambivalent organisations’ stated that if managers perceived that FWAs had a positive effect on productivity, this led to career premiums, but if they perceived that FWAs had a positive effect on personal life (at the expense of productivity), this led to career penalties. In the interviewed line managers about their perceptions of using a specific type of flexible working called ‘reduced load work’ (RLW). They found that managers were more likely to be supportive of this alternative work pattern, if they perceived employees to be high performers, flexible in their use of RLW, and

employed in conducive jobs. Less supportive managers expressed concerns about commitment to the organisation and the impact on productivity. They felt that a request for RLW acted as a warning of employees who were not coping with demands of the full-time job.

Williams, P., McDonald, P., and Cathcart, A. (2016) in ‘Executive-level support for flexible work arrangements in a large insurance organisation’ (2016) found that senior executives, who recognized the strategic benefits of having FWAs, were still concerned about the impact of FWAs on productivity: “executives signaled that FWAs could be implemented where the productivity of the individual and team were not jeopardized. Differences in FWA practices across divisions revealed that open communication and encouragement by executives to their team is essential to explicitly signal support for FWAs”. The study concluded that these senior management attitudes resulted in a tendency for inconsistent practice across the organisation and leaving decisions to supervisory discretion. In addition, as the executives did not use FWAs themselves, this tended to reinforce the message that flexible working is career limiting.

“When operating well, flexible working creates more of a performance culture, as it drives measurement of output rather than presence.” - BP

“74.5% of our employees state that the timeliness of their work output improves when working at home, while 67.4% state that the quality of their work improves when working at home.” – Cisco

In Ernst & Young Firm, **“Flexible working has allowed many employees to work in ways that more closely match the needs of their customers by moving away from the traditional 9 to 5 setup and towards a more blended working life that acknowledges individual project needs.”**

Overall, therefore, the research reinforces the importance of managers’ perceptions of the impact of FWAs on individual and team productivity. These perceptions determine the extent to which managers are prepared to support FWAs. As noted previously, organizational, and supervisory support for FWAs is critical to their success.

Leslie, L.M., Flaherty, C., Park, T., and Mehng, S.I.A. (2012) in ‘Flexible Work Practices: it was stated that highlighted perceptions of flexible working and support for flexible workers are important to achieving individual, team and organizational benefits from FWAs. Research studies showed that managers utilized FWAs as an indicator of employees’ organizational commitment and work ethic. For example, managers’ perceptions of the impact of flexible working on productivity are critical in determining the effect of FWAs on employees’ career success.



Motives for Flexible Work Arrangements Use, Outcomes and Tendencies

There are many different reasons why employers offer flexible work policies and employees choose them. Shockley and Allen (2012) named two broad categories concerning motivation for flexible work arrangements use: life management motives and work-related motives. Life management motives are consistent with the reason of flexible work arrangements creation – that is to help employees to manage both work and personal life at the same time. Studies confirm that desire to maintain work-life balance is indeed a major motivation for employees to use flexible work arrangements. Typical examples of life management motives include altering one's schedule to take one's children to school or to run one's personal errands. The other category behind employees' motivation to use flexible work arrangements is work-related motives. This means that flexible work arrangements are used not only to maintain work-life balance but also to increase personal productivity. For example, to increase one's productivity, a person might choose to work in an office during the hours when the office is the most deserted or to work from a remote area. Also, employees whose tasks are related to creativity and innovations might choose to work not in a usually blank office but areas that inspire them. These examples show work-related motives for flexible work arrangements might be beneficial both for organizations and motivated employees. Regrettably, compared to life management motives, work-related motives have been studied less frequently and there is less knowledge accumulated about them. However, previous studies have already revealed direct and indirect evidence that work-related motives are active.

Discussion:

Besides the several outcomes of flexible work arrangements mentioned above, researchers many more important consequences of the use of flexible work arrangements both for organization and individuals. For example, academics provided strong evidence that usage of flexible work arrangements leads to an increase in commitment, organizational citizenship, and job satisfaction; the employees perform better and are less likely to leave the organization (Warner & Hausdorf, 2009). Duncan and Pettigrew (2012) reported an increase in positive perception of work-family life balance for women when they used flexible schedule. As per a recent Flexjob survey, 73% of respondents believed that working from home has improved their work-life balance, allowing them more time to spend with family, friends, and pets. (2021)

However, the availability and use of flexible work arrangements differ according to individual characteristics of employees, organizations or sector and national contexts (Sweet, Pitt-Catsoupes, Besen, & Golden, 2014). The 2014 National Study of Employers (Matos & Galinsky,

2014) provides empirical evidence of variance according to the size of organizations and individual characteristics: for example, the study showed that 14% of small organizations allow changing starting and quitting times on daily basis for all or most employees while only 5% of large organizations offer this availability. Moreover, the same study reveals that even though 81% of surveyed organizations allow periodically change starting and quitting times at least for some employees, only 21% offer the same option for all or most employees. This empirically illustrates that the level of flexibility varies within the same organization.

The most common measures that companies have offer to help reduce employees' stress has remained in 2020. Working from home policies are the most popular way that workplace leaders attempt to assist their employees' work/life balances as well as during Covid 19. Positively, the number of workplaces offering this benefit 39% in 2020 all over the World.

V. CONCLUSION:

Work flexibility has become a more prominent feature of work design in any organization. A number of societal changes have inspired the need and desire for more flexibility in the workforce. Flexible work arrangements refer to giving employees control over when, where, or how much they work. In this research focused on work flexibility and its relationship with job satisfaction, work stress & work life balance. It was observed that job satisfaction, work stress & work life balance as key constructs as numerous studies have emphasized its importance and relation to such favorable outcomes as reducing turn over intentions, engagement, career success, and work- family facilitation.

Several deficiencies in previous research were pointed out in the literature review, these include: the scarce utilization of a theory-building approach and links to existing organizational theories in studying work flexibility and its effects. Moreover, several anecdotal references have been made in the literature that facets of work flexibility may lead to employee empowerment and productivity. However, these references do not offer rigorous analysis of the relationship between work flexibility, employee empowerment, productivity, and work life balance. Additionally, most of the work lacked theoretical framing and thus bringing to light concerns with internal validity.

It was revealed that flexibility as a form of management sharing authority and control with employees and enabling them to perform their tasks, in other words, the work flexibility to employee empowerment. The employee empowerment as a mediating construct of work flexibility effects on productivity and increase work life balance.

Flexible working is a new dimension rooted in workplace mentality with most of the workers assuming it as the 'new normal' and corporate leaders must acknowledge it as key role in driving business success. However, there is need for



flexi-work adaptation to new way of working while the many of the employees felt that commuting will soon be a distant – and unfortunate – memory, the survey uncovered that there is still a degree of unrealistic mutual understanding of the definition ‘flexible working. & #39;

Conflict of Interest

I, hereby, confirmed that there is no conflict of interest to declare for this publication.

Acknowledgments

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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