

FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract: *University academic employment differs from business employment. Some academics also have administrative roles. If they fulfil performance standards, their work hours are unlimited. Academics who struggle to adapt may incur more mental and professional stress. In light of the recent COVID-19 disease, however, universities have had to modify their methods and provide creative solutions to the associated challenges in a variety of work-related domains. It has been discovered that work-life balance is a significant factor in increasing employee productivity, which is beneficial for the overall success of enterprises. Through the availability of life programmes, work-life culture has an indirect rather than a direct influence on productivity; offering work-life balance programmes and encouraging a happy work environment are crucial for enhancing productivity. Flexible work arrangements increase employee retention and job satisfaction, leading to increased production, according to previous research. A considerable number of higher education institutions provide flexible work hours due to the advantages of flexibility for both employees and employers. Consequently, the objective of this study is to examine the influence of flexible work arrangements and work-life*

balance on employee performance at Universiti Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN), Kajang, Selangor. Using a quantitative methodology, the researcher intends to collect data for this study using a series of questionnaires. This study is non-experimental and uses a correlational approach. 509 academics comprise UNITEN's overall population, which is constituted of its five faculties. The sample size of the academicians in UNITEN's five faculties will be established using Krejcie and Morgan's 1970 sample size table. A total of 217 academicians comprises the total population sample size. The researchers will rely heavily on stratified sampling for their experiment. This study will utilise SPSS version 28 to analyse the collected data. This instrument will be used to do the analysis and respond to the research questions.

Keywords: *Flexible Work Arrangement, Work-Life Balance, Job Performance*

Introduction

The nature of academic job in higher education institutions differs from that of other employees in business organisations. Academics are responsible for teaching, conducting research, writing and publishing publications, and some are also obliged to handle administrative duties. Their work has no time limit as long as they meet their performance indicators. Most countries provide academicians freedom to choose of what and how they teach and conduct research. The autonomy afforded to them provides them with the personal space required for creativity in teaching, research, and industry networking. Academicians who lack flexibility face the risk of developing job and mental pressures because their jobs entail more than just teaching and running administrative chores. However, with the current Covid-19 sickness, higher education institution were obliged to adjust their practises and, as a result, develop new answers to issues that arose in many aspects of their operations. According to Carneval and Hatak (2020), many higher education institutions provide employees with flexible working hours due to the benefits of flexibility for both employees and companies. Work-life balance has become increasingly important in recent decades. It has been discovered that work-life balance is a crucial factor in improving employee productivity, which has a beneficial impact on the overall performance of businesses (Semlali & Hassi, 2016). SOPs, organisational atmosphere, employer attitude, and supervisors' and managers' support are all important elements influencing work-life balance (Haider & Azmi, 2019). In comparison to Western societies, Ghanem's (2010) study revealed that individuals and organisations in Egyptian society are oblivious of the necessity of work-family balance. Such findings emphasise the significance of this study and the critical need to amend the working hours convention, which states that working hours should not exceed 8 hours per day and 48 hours per week (with some exceptions).

Yet, the concept of lengthy working hours varies by country, with several countries defining standard working hours as 35-40 hours per week and 41 hours per overtime work week (Convention No. 1 of the International Labor Organization), which was adopted by the ILO General Conference at its first session in October (1919 AD), and its implementation began in June 1921 AD, and was renewed at the meeting of the International Labor Council in its forty-sixth session June 1962 AD by Recommendation No. (116), Geneva Conference in 1962 AD. International Labor Organization (2017); University of Minnesota (2021). The dates of these agreements suggest the need to seek more appropriate arrangements for our era, especially given the increased reliance on technology today. The need to reduce working hours has grown critical. As a result, this study is going to investigate the influence of flexible work arrangements and work-life balance on employee performance in Universiti Tenaga Nasional, Kajang, Selangor.

Literature Review

Subramaniam et al. (2021) discovered a substantial positive association between performance and flexible working arrangements, and the study discovered that flexible working arrangements improved employee retention and job satisfaction, which led to increased productivity. There is a significant and positive relationship between flexible working arrangements and workplace performance, as well as education, age, wages, the quality of manager-employee relationships, years of experience, the market area in which the workplace is located, and competition (Chung, 2020). According to Hunter (2019), there is a positive relationship between the dimensions of work life quality and the level of organisational commitment, and the variables influencing organisational commitment are (material work conditions, work-life balance, wages and rewards, security, and job stability). Work processes and procedures for human resources personnel play an important part in achieving exceptional performance for individuals (Malaffi & Silvianita, 2021). The greater effort and development of flexible policies for human resource management, the more it stimulates employees to enhance their productivity, improve the quality of their outputs, control time management in satisfying work and personal commitments, boost focus, minimise health care expenditures and stress-related disorders, and increase worker loyalty. The firm distinguishes itself by offering the greatest services and perks to its employees, making it an appealing workplace for both customers and employees, which contributes to higher employee performance. Bear (2017) investigated the relationship between flexible working arrangements and work-family conflict in a large technology company in San Francisco, California, and examined self-control as a moderator between the relationship between flexible working arrangements and employees' experience of work-family conflict. The descriptive analytical approach was employed in this study, and the number of participants included 172 employees. The tool utilised in the study was the questionnaire, which was sent to them by e-mail, and the response rate was 28.6%. Participants with missing data were eliminated, resulting in a final sample of 149 people from the Bay Area. The findings revealed a link between the availability of flexible working arrangements, devotion and sincerity, and the adoption of flexible working arrangements. Furthermore Hsu et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between long working hours and the balance of work and private life, as mediated by occupational stress, and explored whether regulating working time helps reduce the impacts of long working hours and occupational stress. The descriptive analytical method was utilised in this investigation, and the measurement tool was a questionnaire, with a study population of 369. The findings demonstrated a link between lengthy working hours, professional tension, and work-life balance, as well as a link between occupational stress and work-life balance. The most essential recommendations are to examine labour regulations to prevent excessive working hours and to improve working time flexibility.

In line with the results of previous studies, this research posits the following hypothesis:

H1: Flexible work arrangement has a positive and significant effect on employees' performance.

The Relationship Between Flexible Work Arrangements (The Independent Variable), Work-Life Balance (The Mediating Variable)

A study conducted by Palumbo (2020) agreed that flexible working arrangements give employees more job control and autonomy, promote work-life balance, and contribute to higher productivity. According to the researchers, employees who perceive a supportive work culture within their organization's culture are less likely to face work-family issues (Choo et al. ,2016). Previous study done by Chung and Lippe (2018) agree that the marital status of an employee

working for an organisation is essential, while there is more evidence that flexibility promotes work-life balance, particularly during parenting, and that gender equality. Additionally, telecommuting and flexible working do not assist employees who have a partner and/or a child, but only for individuals.

Deepika and Elango's (2020) study aims to provide a socioeconomic overview and social support for female hospitality workers in Chennai, India. The descriptive analytical method is used in this work. A questionnaire was employed in the investigation. There were 130 questionnaires distributed. According to the study's findings, more than a third of respondents (39.2%) experience a lack of work-life balance, whereas fewer than a third (26.0%) experience unsatisfactory work. Indika (2021) conducted a study to investigate the effects of work-life balance strategies on the financial outcomes of Spanish auditing SMEs.

A group of 535 Spanish SME audit businesses was selected using a database, Sistema de Análisis de Balances Ibéricos (SABI) Data, using survey data from 148 Spanish audit firms. A survey questionnaire was distributed via phone or email to 148 professional references from various companies, and the study findings indicate that the availability of WLB practises is critical not only to policymakers and society, but also to organisational culture and human resource management practises. In order to improve the financial outcomes of SME audit businesses, the study suggests that top managers improve specific WLB (time-reduced and flexible work practises). Setiyani et al. (2019) conducted a study attempted to develop a model that provides the framework for describing and analysing the impact of implementing work-life balance techniques on administrative performance, and the study sample size was small (314). The study discovered that there is an imbalance between work and life, particularly for women without males, and that implementing work-life balance techniques improves the administrative performance of managers in government organisations.

In line with the results of previous studies, this research posits the following hypothesis:
H2: flexible work arrangements have a positive and significant effect on working life balance.

The Relationship Between Work-Life Balance and Employee Performance

Fotinha et al. (2019) found that when evaluating the relationship between work-life balance ranking and employee performance and measuring it from six perspectives, including job motivation, employee attendance, employee recruitment, employee retention, organisational commitment, and productivity, the results revealed a positive relationship between work-life balance ranking life and organisational performance, as well as the intermediate variables that influenced the relationship. The principles of the company and how they manage the business internally are vitally crucial in the successful implementation of flexible work arrangements (Ko & Kim, 2018).

The advantages of flexible working arrangements for both employees and employers are obvious, ranging from increased productivity and performance to better work-life balance and employee well-being, according to research by the CIPD (Char Ted Institute for Professional Development) and highlighted by Dousin et al. (2019). In the modern world, flexible working is a widespread and respected practise. These practises are typically implemented to give employees some control over how much (operational flexibility), when (time flexibility), and where (location flexibility) they should work, assisting them in finding a satisfactory balance between work and life. As such, one would not anticipate implementing flexible work to intensify work. Because of this, firms are becoming more interested in introducing flexible

work arrangements to assist employees in juggling their obligations to work and family (Baeza et al.,2018).

In line with the results of previous studies, this research posits the following hypothesis:

H3: Work-life balance has a positive and significant effect and the employees' performance.

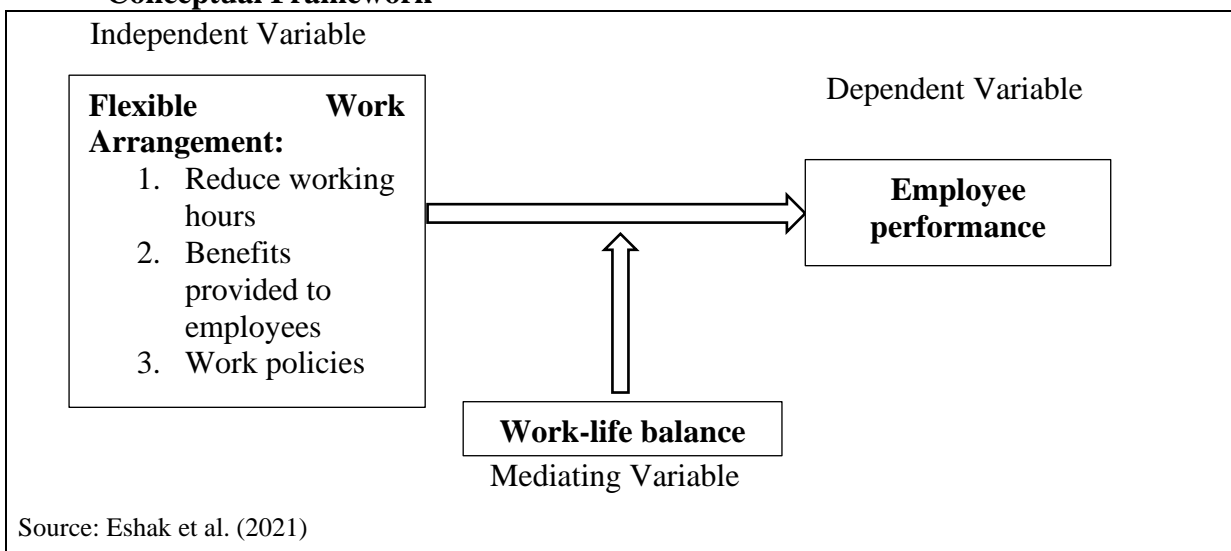
Work-Life Balance Mediates the Relationship Between Flexible Work Arrangements and Employee Performance.

The study by Maharani et al. (2020) looked at the connection between working life and organisational productivity and tested if working life programmes were able to mitigate it. The data showed that working life culture has an indirect impact on work productivity through the availability of life programmes rather than a direct impact due to the availability of data from two databases and additional archival data from three worldwide surveys. The study discovered the significance of encouraging a work environment that is favourable and offering work-life balance programmes since it increases productivity. According to a study by Taşdelen and Bakalım (2017), the work-life balance scale is intended to be used as a mediating variable in the development of a work-life balance indicator for Turkish women and men. This study also examined the mediating role of work-life balance on work-family conflict, work-family conflict, and life satisfaction, and the sample size was 274. The work-life balance scale showed that the indirect impacts of work-family conflict and work-family conflict on life satisfaction through work-life balance were supported by valid and reliable structural equation models. Additionally, a study by Ajayaghosh and Santhosh (2020) examines the factors that influence work-life balance and how it impacts employee performance in a sample of commercial banks in Kerala's central region. The study also examines whether WLB performance always indicates satisfactory performance and can therefore be used as a tool for predicting employee performance.

In line with the results of previous studies, this research posits the following hypothesis:

H4: Work-life balance mediates the relationship between flexible work arrangements and the employee performance.

Conceptual Framework



Source: Eshak et al. (2021)

Figure 1: Conceptual framework on Flexible Work Arrangements and Their Effects on Employee Performance in Private Higher Education Institutions.

Methodology

Research Design

A research design is the framework for research, serving as the "glue" to hold all the components of a given study together (Akhtar, 2016). The researcher will use non-experimental research, such as quantitative, descriptive, historical, and correlational research, in the context of the research strategy for this study. According to Akhtar (2016), quantitative research is a technique for gathering data from the targeted sample frame using open-ended questions and interactions. The goal of this approach is to determine not just "what" people believe, but also "how" and "why" they hold that belief.

As a result, the researcher intends to use a set of questionnaires to collect the data for this study using a quantitative method. A correlational study is chosen for the non-experimental research. Salkind (2010) claims that a correlational study is made to show how two or more things are related, the similarities they may share, or how well one or more inputs can predict an outcome. He also shows how to use the correlation coefficient, a numerical statistic, to determine the strength of the association. In order to investigate the mediating role of work-life balance on the influence of flexible work arrangements and employees' performance among academicians in private higher education in Kajang, Selangor, a correlational study will be focused on and used. Instruments are employed by the researcher as measurement tools to gather, measure, and evaluate data that are pertinent to the study (Salkind, 2010). Additionally, he emphasises that the tools employed must be able to help in addressing the goals, objectives, and research questions of the study as well as supporting or refuting the study's hypotheses. The instrument for this study will be a collection of pre-existing questionnaires from previous investigations. A meeting will be scheduled with a representative from UNITEN, and a discussion will be held to brief them on the project. The questionnaire will then be created using Google Forms and circulated at UNITEN for a set length of time. Roopa and Rani (2012) claim that using a questionnaire is appropriate for any research. This clearly demonstrates the adaptability and utility of using questionnaires in research, particularly in the quantitative research at hand.

Population

Rahi (2017) defines population as the total number of individuals or objects that a person may wish to comprehend. According to Salkind (2010), the population is the group of possible persons to whom a person wants to generalise the research findings. Meanwhile, the features of a population that are inherent in a multiverse distribution, in this case, such as age, employment, and education, are reliant on one another (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Academicians from UNITEN will be involved in this investigation to acquire a solid generalisation. The total population obtained from the five faculties in UNITEN are 509 academicians. UNITEN's lecturers will be chosen as respondents for this study since UNITEN has implemented a new policy that allows them to work from anywhere (WFA). More interest is shown by both the employers and employees regarding WFA and this applies to the body of literature as well in unravelling how work could or should be carried out in the future (Citrin & DeRosa 2021). WFA provide the academicians in UNITEN with geographic flexibility, which means that the academicians can choose to live in their preferred geographical location in order to perform the daily academic tasks. A study conducted by Choudhury et al. (2020) found that productivity can be affected if the employees choose to WFA rather than WFH and the study shows a promising result with the average productivity of the employees boosting up to 4.4 percent. Hence, UNITEN follows the exact same work policies in their flexible work arrangement by

offering WFA and this intrigues the researcher to conduct a similar test but to a different setting by selecting the academicians from UNITEN.

Sampling Technique

Stratified sampling will be used extensively by the researchers for this investigation. When a population has a mix of characteristics, stratified sampling is appropriate to ensuring that each trait is fairly represented in the sample (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020). Mweshi and Sakyi (2020) define stratified sampling as the process of dividing the population into subgroups (referred to as strata) based on pertinent factors including employment function, gender, and income. Rahi (2017) provides evidence for this claim by defining stratified random sampling as a procedure in which each stratum is given an equal chance of being randomly chosen. He also stresses how equally proportionate representation for each stratum is provided by stratified random sampling.

Sampling Size

Taherdoost (2017) asserts that the sample size is a crucial component of empirical research because the goal is to draw conclusions about a certain population from a sample. He goes on to say that in order to generalise from a random sample and to prevent any sampling errors, a random sample must have an acceptable size. A very small sample size, however, is not a good indicator of the population as a whole (Salkind, 2010). Therefore, a suitable sample size is necessary for any future research. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), on the other hand, a study should not utilise a sample size that is too large due to problems where a certain finding is essentially accepted when it should be rejected. The sample size of the academicians in UNITEN's five faculties will be determined using the sample size table created by Krejcie and Morgan in 1970. 217 academicians make up the sample size for the entire population.

Data Analysis

This study will be utilised SPSS version 28 to evaluate the data gathered. This tool will be used to do the analysis and answer the research questions. According to Landau and Everitt (2003), SPSS may study descriptive statistics, and correlation will be used to depict and explain the analysis, which includes percentages, frequencies, means, medians, and modes. Furthermore, SPSS tools software may support and display table, graph, and pie chart illustrations. As a result, this demonstrates that SPSS is an appropriate tool for analysing the data in this study. This is corroborated by Gogoi (2020), who argues unequivocally that the SPSS programme is a widely used statistical data analysis software in the field of social science.

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