Flexible Work Arrangements: Empowering Employees through Supervisor Support for Enhanced Well-being

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Abstract

This study investigates the linkage between flexible work arrangements (FWAs), supervisor support and employee well-being in information technology (IT) sector. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied for the analysis of data. The study reveals that FWAs directly enhance employee well-being. Furthermore, supervisor support was found to mediate this relationship, indicating that the presence of supportive supervisors enhances the positive effects of FWAs on employee well-being. The mediation suggests that supervisors are key to facilitate a supportive work environment which fosters employee well-being amidst the implementation of FWAs.

Keywords: Flexible work arrangements, supervisor support, employee well-being, structural equation modelling.

Introduction

Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) have gained prominence as organizations recognize the benefits of providing employees with more autonomy and control over their work schedules and environments. The rationale behind FWAs lies in the acknowledgment of changing dynamics of modern workforce and the emerging needs of employees (Sekhar & Patwardhan, 2023). Flexibility in work arrangements permits employees to manage better their professional responsibilities along with personal obligations, such as childcare, eldercare, further education, or fulfilling hobbies and interests.

Employers worldwide are increasingly turning to FWAs as a strategic approach to attract and retain talent while boosting their competitive edge. These FWAs, including flextime, job sharing, compressed workweeks, and teleworking offer benefits for both organizations and employees. Flexitime grants employees the autonomy to determine some of their working hours, promoting work-life balance and job satisfaction. Job sharing allows multiple employees to share the job responsibilities, and facilitates workload management and caters to various scheduling needs. Compressed workweeks shorten the standard hours into fewer days, giving employees longer periods of rest and

leisure. Teleworking enables employees to work remotely while staying connected electronically to the workplace, reducing commuting stress and enhancing flexibility. By embracing these FWAs, organizations demonstrate a commitment to employee well-being and productivity, fostering a positive work culture while remaining competitive in the global marketplace (Peretz et al., 2018).

Previous studies indicate that companies offering FWAs see notable reductions in both attrition rates and absenteeism. FWAs serve as a mechanism to alleviate work-family conflict by reducing the interference of non-work obligations on the job duties. These arrangements not only directly impact absenteeism and turnover but also act as a mediator between organizational and cultural characteristics and these organizational outcomes. Drawing from social exchange theory, it's suggested that employees experience a sense of reciprocity towards their organization when they perceive care for their well-being through FWAs. This fosters a sense of obligation to contribute positively, resulting in decreased absenteeism and turnover rates(Peretz et al., 2018; Stavrou, 2005; Wayne et al., 2006).

FWAs offer employees the flexibility to manage their time effectively, allowing them to balance work and personal responsibilities. These arrangements promote collaboration among employees, regardless of their physical location, through remote work options. Additionally, FWAs have become instrumental in ensuring the health and safety of workers and communities, particularly in response to recent global challenges like COVID-19 pandemic (Shifrin & Michel, 2022; Sinclair et al., 2020).

Conducting a study on FWA is crucial to understand their impact on employee productivity, well-being, and organizational performance. Such research helps identify best practices, assess effectiveness, and enlighten policy decisions, ultimately shaping how FWAs are implemented to be the most advantageous for both employees and organizations. Moreover, studying FWAs enables organizations to stay responsive to evolving workforce needs and competitive market demands, ensuring they remain agile and adaptable in today's precarious business environment.

Flexible work arrangements serve as a conduit for employees to perceive supervisor support more positively, nurturing a sense of trust and collaboration within the workplace. This perception of support not only boosts morale but also contributes to overall well-being, as individuals feel valued and empowered to manage their work-life balance effectively. This symbiotic relationship fosters a culture where employees thrive, leading to increased productivity, creativity, and satisfaction in both professional and personal spheres.

In light of recognizing the pivotal role of flexible work arrangements, supervisor support and employee' well-being in the workplace, this study endeavours to examine direct influence of FWAs on the employees' well-being concurrently investigating how supervisor support mediates this relationship. Fig. 1 depicts the conceptual model of the study.

Fig.1. Conceptual Study
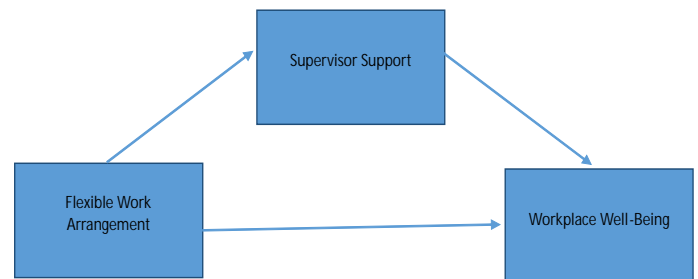
Literature Review

Flexible work arrangement

Alternative work schedules, such as flexitime and compressed workweeks, have been shown to positively impact productivity and performance by allowing employees greater control over their work hours, leading to increased efficiency and effectiveness. Moreover, these schedules often lead to increased job satisfaction as the employees manage their work-life balance more effectively. Additionally, reduced absenteeism is commonly associated with alternative work schedules, as employees are better able to attend to personal needs without sacrificing work commitments. Overall, the flexibility offered by these arrangements tends to enhance

satisfaction with work schedules, contributing to a more content and engaged workforce.(Baltes et al.,1999).McNall et al., (2009) investigated how two common flexible work arrangements, flexitime and compressed workweeks, relate to work to family enrichment and the resultant impact on job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Analysing data from 220 adult employees', researchers found that work-to-family (WF) enrichment mediated the link between FWA and the job satisfaction as well as turnover intentions. Also, the outcomes suggest that offering flexible work options like flexitime and compressed workweeks can foster greater WF enrichment, leading to increased job satisfaction and decreased turnover intentions among employees. (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006)presented a thorough theoretical framework for the WF enrichment, highlighting mutual reciprocal relationship between the realms of work and family. Their model elucidates how positive experiences and resources in one area can boost the quality of life in other, and vice versa. This framework underscores the significance of supportive environments, flexible work arrangements, and individual coping strategies in promoting well-being and satisfaction across work and family roles.

Well-being

Investing in employee well-being fuels a virtuous cycle of productivity and satisfaction, elevating both individual and organizational performance. By nurturing supportive environments and holistic support systems, we empower employees to thrive professionally and personally. Prioritizing well-being is not just compassionate; it is a strategic imperative for unlocking untapped potential and fostering sustainable success.

Despite extensive research on the employee well-being, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding, conceptual clarity, and a universally accepted definition of employee well-being (Pradhan & Hati, 2022).(Pradhan & Hati, 2022) defines employee well-being as "employee well-being connotes the physical, psychological and emotional health, comfort and happiness of employees".(Juniper et al., 2011; Siegrist et al., 2007)

viewed employee well-being as the holistic state of wellness experienced by employees, shaped by their perceptions of how work and interventions within the workplace impact their overall welfare. (Ryan & Deci, 2000) delineated two significant philosophical perspectives of well-being: hedonism, which emphasizes happiness, and the eudemonism, which focuses on the achieving of human potential. Further, well-being is categorized into context-free and domain-specific dimensions. Context-free well-being encompasses overall wellness across various life aspects, like satisfaction and happiness. Domain-specific well-being, on the other hand, targets wellness within specific areas such as work, addressing factors like job satisfaction and relationships with colleagues. Job-specific well-being is a subset of area-specific well-being, focusing specifically on individuals' well-being in the workplace (Pradhan & Hati, 2022).

Supervisor Support

Supervisor support serves as the foundation for fostering a culture of innovation, empowering employees to explore new ideas with confidence while providing guidance and resources for their implementation. Supervisor support measures the extent to which subordinates are aided and backed by their supervisors in their work roles (Maertz Jr et al., 2007). It reflects how employees perceive the strength and worth of their rapport with their supervisors (Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe, 2003). Researchers have argued that the support provided by supervisors contributes significantly to shaping favourable attitudes towards the organization among employees. This suggests that when supervisors offer guidance, encouragement, and resources, employees likely to develop more positive perceptions and feelings about their workplace (Eisenberger et al., 2002).The impact of supervisor support in mitigating employees' perceptions of uncertainty and emotional exhaustion can be elucidated by social support theory. This theory proposes that social support acts as a protective shield against the adverse effects caused by stressful events by influencing individuals' cognitive evaluations and coping strategies (Charoensukmongkol & Phungsoonthorn, 2020).

Research Methodology

Sampling & Procedure

The sample consisted of persons employed in IT sector specifically within the Delhi NCR region. A purposive sampling method was employed to distribute 550 survey questionnaires. Of these, 380 responses were received, and after screening, 321 were deemed valid. Table 1 provides a summary of the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Measurement

Responses were collected was using standardized and well-established measurement scales to measure the flexible work arrangement, supervisor support and employees' workplace wellbeing.

Flexible Work Arrangements- Measurement of the flexible work arrangement was done using an eight-item scale adapted from (Albion, 2004).

Supervisor Support - The measurement of supervisor's support was carried out by (Eisenberger et al., 2002) four-item scale.

Workplace Well-being- Workplace well-being was assessed by (Pradhan & Hati, 2022) with nine item scales.

Table 1: Characteristics of Respondents (N = 321)

No.	Demographics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	199	61.99
		Female	122	38.01
	Age	21 -30	71	22.12
		21- 40	83	25.86
2		41- 50	69	21.50
		Above 50 Years	98	30.52
3	Education	Bachelor's Degree	178	55.45
		Postgraduate Degree or higher Degree	143	44.55
4	Marital Status	Married	197	61.37
		Unmarried	124	38.62
7	Experience	Below 5 years	105	32.71
		5-10 years	72	22.43
		11-20 years	85	26.48
		21 years and above	59	18.38

Measurement Model

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was accomplished by AMOS 21.0 software. The proposed three-factor model demonstrated a strong fit 2/df = 3.182; GFI = 0.892; AGFI = 0.914; CFI = 0.929; SRMR= 0.032 and RMSEA = 0.028 . Table 2 shows all constructs surpass the 0.7 Cronbach's

alpha benchmark, indicating scale reliability. Additionally, Table 2 confirms convergent validity with AVE and CR values exceeding 0.5 and 0.7(Hair et al., 2010), respectively, while Table 3 affirms discriminant validity as the square root of AVE surpasses inter-construct correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Fig. 2 demonstrates the measurement model of the study.

Table 2: Summary of the measurement model

Variables and items	Factor Loading	Alpha	AVE	CR
Flexible Work Arrangements		0.936	0.654	0.936
FWA1	.899			
FWA 2	.888			
FWA 3	.882			
FWA 4	.865			
FWA 5	.891			
FWA 6	.881			
FWA 7	.531			
FWA 8	.506			
Supervisor Support		0.937	0.790	0.938
SS 1	.913			
SS 2	.832			
SS 3	.915			
SS 4	.895			
Workplace Well-Being		0.941	0.656	0.941
WWB 1	.401			
WWB 2	.356			
WWB 3	.889			
WWB 4	.911			
WWB 5	.933			
WWB 6	.908			
WWB 7	.888			
WWB 8	.897			
WWB 9	.843			

Table 3: Discriminant validity

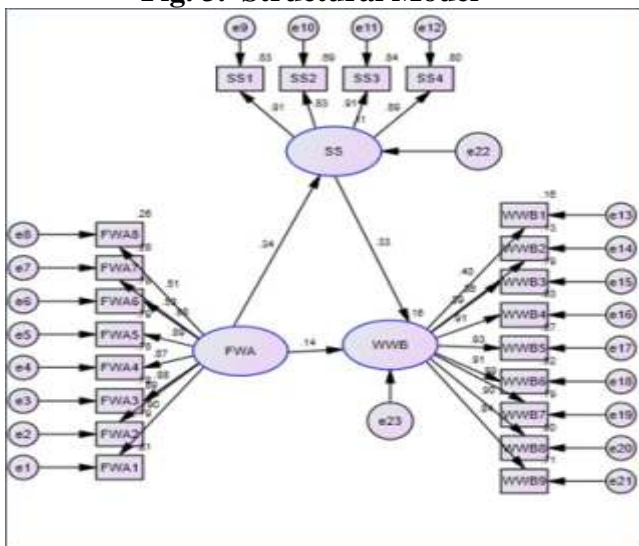| Constructs	Flexible Work Arrangements	Supervisor Support	Workplace Well -Being
Flexible Work Arrangements	**0.809**		
Supervisor Support	0.336	**0.889**	
Workplace Well -Being	0.248	0.376	**0.810**

Fig.2. Measurement Model
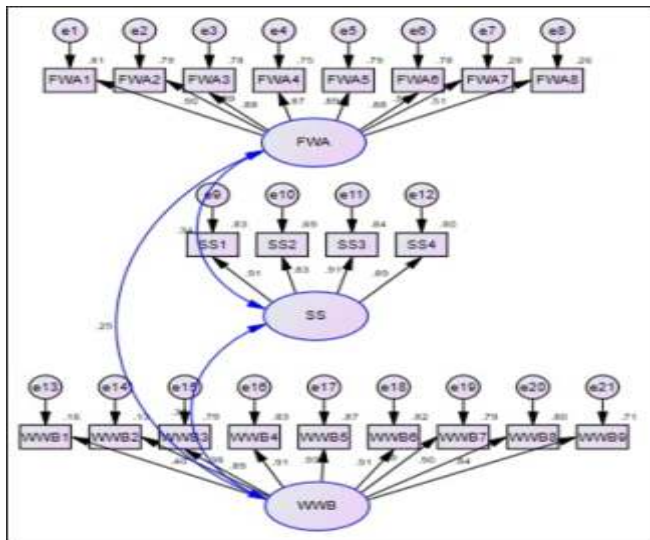
Structural Analysis

The structural model demonstrated a favourable fit for our dataset with CMIN/DF = 3.181, GFI = 0.890, AGFI = 0.914, CFI = 0.930, SRMR= 0.032 RMSEA = 0.026. The findings reveal a positive relationship between the FWAs and employees' workplace well-being (b = 0.137, p < 0.05). Employing a bootstrapping technique with 5000 resamples, the analysis indicates that supervisor support mediates partially the link between FWAs and employees' workplace well-being (b = 0.111, p < 0.05). Fig. 3 displays the structural model of the study.

Fig. 3. Structural Model

Discussion

The research on the relationship between FWAs and the employees' workplace well-being shed light on an increasingly pertinent aspect of modern work dynamics. The findings reveal a positive correlation between FWAs and employees' overall well-being in the workplace. This association highlights the potential benefits that flexible work arrangements can offer in terms of fostering a healthier and more conducive work environment. Flexibility in work arrangements offers employees to manage their professional duties with the personal commitments, leading to reduced stress levels and increased job satisfaction. Moreover, the research indicates that supervisor support has significant role in mediating this relationship. Supervisors who demonstrate understanding and support for flexible work arrangements contribute significantly to enhancing employees' well-being by fostering a positive work culture and facilitating the successful implementation of flexible policies. By recognizing the importance of supervisor support as a mediator, organizations can strategically leverage managerial practices to optimize the positive impact of FWAs on employees' workplace well-being. This highlights the need for organizations to not only implement flexible policies but also ensure that supervisors are equipped with the necessary skills and resources to effectively support their teams in embracing these arrangements. In doing so, businesses can promote a more resilient and thriving workforce, ultimately leading to improved productivity and organizational success".

Managerial Implications

The study carries several practical implications. Implementing flexible work arrangements (FWAs) is paramount for organizations aiming to adapt to the changing dynamics of the modern workplace. To effectively promote FWAs, organizations should first assess the feasibility and compatibility of such arrangements with their operational structure and business objectives. This assessment should include the factors, such as nature of the work, technology infrastructure, and employee preferences. Subsequently, organizations can establish clear policies and guidelines outlining the various

FWA options available, such as flexitime, telecommuting, or compressed workweeks. Providing training and resources to managers and employees on how to effectively navigate FWAs and manage remote work can further facilitate successful implementation. Additionally, organizations should foster a culture that values flexibility and autonomy, emphasizing outcomes over traditional notions of time and presence in the office. By promoting FWAs, organizations can enhance employee satisfaction, attract top talent, and improve overall productivity and performance.

Supervisor support is essential for the successful implementation and maintenance of FWAs within organizations. Supervisors play a critical role in facilitating communication, providing guidance, and addressing concerns related to remote work and flexible schedules. Organizations can promote supervisor support for employees by providing leadership training. These programs would equip managers with the tools and resource for effective remote team management and in navigating FWAs. Encouraging open and transparent communication between supervisors and employees, particularly regarding expectations, goals, and performance feedback, is crucial for fostering trust and accountability in remote work environments. Furthermore, organizations should recognize and reward supervisors who actively promote and advocate for FWAs, reinforcing a culture that values flexibility and employee well-being. By prioritizing supervisor support, organizations can ensure the successful adoption and sustainable implementation of FWAs, ultimately driving employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention".

Employee workplace well-being is a fundamental pillar of organizational success and should be on highest priority for organizations promoting FWAs. To support employee well-being in a flexible work environment, organizations should provide comprehensive wellness programs and resources aimed at promoting physical, mental, and emotional health. These programs may include access to mental health services, workshops on stress management, ergonomic assessments, and initiatives promoting work-life balance. Additionally, organizations should encourage regular communication and check-ins between managers and employees to monitor well-being and address any concerns proactively. Creating opportunities for social connection and community building among remote workers through virtual events, team-building activities, and online forums can also help combat feelings of isolation and promote a sense of belonging. Prioritizing employee well-being is key to fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment where employees feel supported, engaged, and resilient.

Conclusion

The association between employee well-being and the presence of flexible work arrangements along with the supportive supervisors illuminates a crucial aspect of contemporary workplaces. This association emphasizes the importance of adapting work structures to accommodate individual needs while fostering a culture of understanding and empowerment. Ultimately, prioritizing these factors not only cultivates a healthier and happier workforce but also lays the foundation for sustained organizational success in a rapidly changing environment.

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