



AENSI Journals

Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences

ISSN:1991-8178

Journal home page: www.ajbasweb.com



Flexible Work Arrangement and Work Life Balance Among Employee by Gender

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 10 October 2014

Received in revised form

22 November 2014

Accepted 28 November 2014

Available online 1 December 2014

Keywords:

work life balance, gender, flexible work arrangement.

ABSTRACT

In today's world, both organization and employees are aware and concerned about the importance of work arrangement flexibility and work life balance. The link between the flexibility working hour schedule and the balance between work and life that relate to the individual responsibility is considered as a crucial issue in most organization. In present, many organizations use the flexibility issue as a method to motivate their employees thus increases the organization's productivity. The flexibility in work arrangement selected for this research was flexitime, part time and job sharing. Work life balance is also one of the essential factor for organizations to offer to their employees for the purpose of increasing organizational performance. Therefore, this research was aimed to find out the importance of flexible work arrangement in order to balance the employee's life between work and family. The respondent of this research are non-exempt employees which are also referred to as the staff who are entitled to claim for the allowance after their working hours (Susan, 2002). The population identified was 235 and with anticipated low response rate, all population was taken as respondent. The total of 235 questionnaires has been distributed to employees in the international private universities and colleges located in Kuala Lumpur; however only 144 returned and used in the data analysis. The finding discussed the benefit of the flexibility work arrangement to the organization and employee and also suggested preference method for flexibility of work arrangement in the education institution by employee to enhance their work life balance. In addition, it also explores whether gender plays any role towards flexible work arrangement and work life balance.

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To Cite This Article: RA Rahim, N Jaafar, NF Salleh, MM-- Yusof, NL Ahmad, RMR Mustapha., Flexible Work Arrangement and Work Life Balance Among Employee By Gender. *Aust. J. Basic & Appl. Sci.*, 8(23): 291-298, 2014

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, a work-life conflict has become a main issue of academic and practitioner debate which is increasing the commonness of work-life balance practices that include family supportive in organizations around the world (Kersley, Alpin, Forth, Bryson, Bewkey, Dix, and Oxenbridge; 2005). According to Felstead and Jewson (2000), work-life balance can be defined as 'the relationship between the institutional and cultural times and spaces of work and non-work in societies where income is predominantly generated and distributed through labour markets'. There are many definition by past research but the term that usually refers to one of the following, organizational support for dependent care, flexible work options, and family or personal leave (Estes and Michael; 2005). Therefore, a work-life balance research is commonly focuses on responsibilities of employee's family, and a number of studies have identified commitments to friends and community groups, mounting the affected population to almost all of the employees. Furthermore, work-life balance may have achieved the status of a defining employment issue and some progress has unquestionably been made toward the introduction of flexible work arrangements.

Nowadays, the problematic issues of work and family are increasing in the corporate world. The two most popular solutions to this problem was flexible work arrangements which are flexitime and flexplace (SHRM Foundation, 2001). However, employees reporting high levels of both work-to-life and life-to-work conflict which tend to demonstrate lower levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Burke and Greenglass, 1999). As the previous studies at 1960s has proliferated on the correlation between work and family roles that initially concerned mostly with women and work-family stress Lewis and Cooper (2005).

Additionally, organization support towards the employee work-life balance is considered as critical and able to increase level of satisfaction and improve performance (Rupashree and Shivganesh, 2011). Previous research clearly shows that the employees have faces a lots of stress and problem due to the unstable work life balance. Therefore it is essential to access the importance of Flexible work Arrangement (FWA) towards Work Life

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Balance (WLB). Another factor that argued by previous research is about gender. The argument said that gender which is male and female is the moderator variables should also be taken into consideration factor that might interrupt and contribute into the work life balance. According to Casper and Harris (2008) a work-life have an impact to organizational commitment that moderated by gender and practice use.

This factor is very important in this research to determine the relationship and effect towards the employee work life balance. Therefore, this research also examines gender impact to the flexible work arrangement and work life balance.

Literature Review:

Flexible working arrangement (FWA): can be defined as giving employee a chance to make some adjustment to their total amount of hours worked such as part time work or job shares and scheduling of hours worked.

There are a few different types of alternative work arrangements or flexible work arrangement. The two major categories of flexible work arrangements are schedule flexibility and location flexibility. Within these, there are many types of arrangements, but there are a few that are the most popular. According to American Business Collaboration (2007), flexitime is one of the highest percentage flexible work arrangement implemented by organization compared to telecommuting and compressed work week. Therefore flexitime selected in this research as dimensions of FWA. Job sharing is still a relatively uncommon practice in some industries. In a study done by the American Business Collaboration (2007) only 1% of respondents said that they used job sharing. Part of the reason for its lack in popularity may be due to some misconceptions regarding the value and feasibility of job sharing. Some of the most common concerns are as followed: job sharing costs too much; job sharing managers will have a difficult time managing the employees. This research selected job sharing as one of the FWA dimensions because researchers believed job sharing ease parents raising children, job sharing can be extremely beneficial because it allows parents to retain their positions and continue on their path professionally (Collins and Krause, 1984). According to Helen, O'Connel, Philip, McGinnity and Frances (2007) there has been an increase in part-time relative to full-time employment. In some cases, this is the result of a political decision to promote part-time work, particularly in countries suffering from high unemployment. For workers, it may offer the chance of a better balance between working life and family responsibilities, training, leisure or civic activities. Part time is an important FWA to the employee generally because it able to help employee achieve work life balance (Helen *et al.*, 2007).

Part-time regarding on work pressure, part-time staff are being introduce to deal with greatest in demand and by having part time work, it may reduce work pressure within the organisation (Helen *et al.*, 2007). *Job Sharing* is referred as an arrangement in which two employees will share their work of one full-time position, allocating their pay and remunerations to the time worked (Peter, Sile and Orla, 2010). Job sharing generally works best for a few demographics. The career-oriented mother is generally the most common fit for job sharing. As mentioned earlier, these mothers would like to retain their positions and would like to keep the career from being derailed due to an extended time out of professional work. *Flexitime* is defined as allowing employees to vary their starting and finishing times of work, outside the core-time and being provided a contract volume of work hour over a given compensation period (Peter, Sile and Orla, 2010).

Work life balance: is very important for the employee to increase their performance. Therefore, organizations have to offer flexibility to the employee to ease and increase maximum ability in the work life. The support given by the organizational towards the employee work-life balance is consider as an essential and help to increase the level of satisfaction and improve their performance (Rupashree and Shivganesh, 2011). As well as stated by Gregory and Connolly (2008), that this flexibility can ease the employee by making a work balance and personal desire, however it can also cause to a unclear limit between both work and personal life. Kossek, Baltes and Matthews (2011) stated that the employee's work-life balance attitudes can be influence to a positive manner and decreasing the work conflict when they have and know that their supervisors or organizations give support and care for their work life. In this research, researchers have identified important characteristics able to contribute to work life balance which social, family and also in term of financial. According to past research by (Kossek, Baltes and Matthews, 2011) and (Rupashree and Shivganesh, 2011) these areas believe have an influence towards the flexibility of work arrangement facilitates by the organization.

Gender role and influences: Casper and Harris (2008) stated that a work-life practice availability give an impact to organizational commitment was moderated by gender and by practice use. It is also said by Rupashree and Shivganesh (2011) that there is needs to observe whether the demographic background such as gender has play the role as a moderator that can influence employees life balance. Therefore this research investigates the impact of gender towards Flexible work arrangement and work life balance.

Research Objectives:

The purpose of this research is to study and determine the association between part time, flexitime and job sharing method as the flexible working arrangement in enhancing work life balance. This research also attempted to find out whether the gender factor controlling the relationship between flexible work arrangement and work life balance. It is crucial for this research to identify those objectives to enhance productivity and organizational performance to ensure the aspiration of Malaysian government which is to become a high income nation will be successful. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, when tabling the 2014 Budget, said the FWA could be implemented through compressed work week, flexible hours and weekend work. "To encourage more Malaysian companies to adopt FWA as the norm, the government proposes that training expenses and consultancy fees incurred by employers in implementing FWA be given further tax deduction" Bernama (2013). Stated below were the research questions of this research.

1. What is the most preferred Flexible Work Arrangement in the international private universities and colleges?
2. Is there any significant relationship between Flexible Work Arrangement dimension's with Work Life Balance?
3. Is there a positive relationship between Flexible Work Arrangement and Work Life Balance among employees by gender?

Research Design:

The design of this study is correlation research which to identify the relationship between variables. The population was 235 employees in the international private universities and colleges, Kuala Lumpur. Therefore, due the small population for this study, all the employees in the institutions listed were taken as a sample, meaning all 235 employees from nine (9) institutions is the sample size. The unit analysis for this study is the non-exempt employees in the support level at the international private universities and colleges located in the Federal Territory Kuala Lumpur. The departments include Human Resource, Bursary, Library, Faculties & Technical and Maintenance Department. The numbers of questionnaire distributed were 235 questionnaires. However, from the total number only 150 questionnaires have been returned by the respondents. The researcher had eliminated the invalid questionnaire such as incomplete survey and 144 (61.3%) valid questionnaires were selected for analysis.

The instrument used in this research was in the form of questionnaires with a five point Likert Scale. The questionnaires have been validated by experts before being distributed. A pilot test has been carried out and all items of Cronbach Alpha value show in the range of .68 to .80. Cronbach Alpha value for actual study shows more than .80. The value indicated that the instrument of each dimension and variable are reliable to be used for this research. Reliability statistic is shown in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1: Independent Variable and dependent Variable reliability statistic.

Variables	Reliability Statistics		
	No of Items	Pilot Test	Actual Study
Flexitime	5	.789	.899
Job Sharing	5	.718	.890
Part Time	5	.681	.871
Work Life Balance	7	.801	.828

The data collected has also been checked by exploratory data analysis to examine the data before any specific statistical procedures were used. Then the data involved was analysed using various statistical procedures to answer the research objectives such as descriptive statistic, Pearson correlation and Partial correlation. Pearson Correlation (Pearson 'r') test was conducted to answer the research objective which is to measure the relationship between flexible work arrangement and its dimensions with work life balance and partial correlation to measure the controlling factor of gender towards flexible work arrangement and work life balance.

Findings and Discussion:

The analysis of data was performed in two stages. The initial stage of the analysis involved an exploratory data analysis to examine the data before any specific statistical procedures were used. The second stage involved using various statistical procedures to answer the research objectives. Descriptive statistic, Pearson correlation and Partial correlation test was conducted to answer the research objectives.

A. Preferred Method of Flexible Work Arrangement:

The findings of this study shows mean value for flexitime, part time, job sharing. Table 1.2 shows the highest mean is flexitime $M = 4.53$ ($SD = .44$) followed by part time $M=4.45$ ($SD=.52$) and job sharing $M = 4.03$ ($SD = .65$). This result indicates flexitime was the most preferred flexible work arrangement by the employees.

Table 1.2: Means Score Dimensions of Flexible Work Arrangement (N=144).

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Flexitime	4.5347	.44112
Part time	4.4597	.52040
Job Sharing	4.0333	.65462

According to Peter *et al* (2010), flexitime can be defined as, allowing employees to vary their starting and finishing times of work, outside the core-time and being provided a contract volume of work hour over a given compensation period. This shows that most of the respondents has chosen their time of work in the organization as what convenience them the most. The advantages in terms of giving freedom or an option to the employee to manage and choose their time of work in the organization. This option is more preferred by the employee probably because of the commitment they have with their family as most of the respondents are married employees. The employees might need to do their housekeeping, prepare and send their children to school or their concern about the elder care before they come to work.

Another reason the employees prefers flexitime rather than job sharing and part time because it eases employees who live far from their workplace and need time for travelling. In other words, flexitime ease employees schedule arrangement and convenient for them.

The result is consistent with the research carried out by Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright and Neuman (1999) it shows that flexitime and compressed working in which overall of it have a positive effect on job satisfaction (Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright and Neuman, 1999). Although, flexible working hour somehow will reduce work-life conflict, however, it can be seen that men usually use flexible starting time to increase their working hour, thus, might worsen work-life conflict (Helen *et al*, 2007).

Flexitime is the most popular in public sector and one of accepted by firm for work-family practices (Marni and Melissa, 1996). There are number of organization that offering employee an option to use flexible work schedule or flexitime in order to help employee balance their work and family (Bond, Hyman, Summers and Wise, 2002).

In comparison with part time and job sharing, not selected as most popular method of FWA because perception of top management towards part-time work may increase the administrative workload to the organization for example hiring 2 part-timers for each full-time job would mean that the organization has to maintain and process 2 sets of personnel records. Higher overheads such as training cost, workmen compensation, furniture and equipment may also be incurred as a result of having 2 persons in one position. It may be more difficult to arrange training sessions, team meetings. Certain jobs may need to be re-designed to make part-time work feasible and this would incur costs. Therefore, organization would not encourage employee to have part time job and job sharing.

B. Relationship between Flexible Work Arrangements dimensions and Work Life Balance:

Subsequently, in order to seek the relationship of each dimensions of flexible work arrangement and work life balance, Pearson correlation test was conducted. The scale in determining the strength of relationship taken from Salkind (2012). The results show that there was a significant and positive relationship between first dimensions of flexible work arrangement which is flexitime. The correlation coefficient value was positive ($r = .801$) indicating a positive and strong correlation between flexitime and work life balance. The second dimension of flexible work arrangement which is job sharing also was tested to determine its relationship with work life balance. The result showed value ($r = .659$), indicating job sharing and work life balance also had a significant positive relationship with a strong correlation. The correlation for the third dimension of work life balance, that is part time ($r = .798$) also indicated a positive relationship with a significantly strong relationship between each variable. Overall the result demonstrated that all dimensions of flexible work arrangement and work life balance had significant, strong and positive relationships with the work life balance.

The result indicates from all dimensions of flexible work arrangement, flexitime is the highest correlation which is very strong relationship between the flexitime and the Work Life Balance. Based on the finding made, it shows that flexitime is more appropriate for the employee probably due to the family responsibility factor. Similarly, study made by Keith and Peter (2008), stated that the employees may find that flexitime method ease them to complete their job. In addition this method can also help them to reduce or manage their way of work from facing any difficulties in work or family responsibilities Keith and Peter (2008).

Followed by part time, the finding shows a positive relationship between part time and work life balance. According to Helen *et al* (2007), part time work can be defined as an additional working day other than standard time such as normal working time (Helen *et al*, 2007). Part time method is one of the methods offered in the

organization that required the employee to work in additional days or more than normal days. Usually the employees who involved to work in part time working day is those who have a particular or specific skills that needed by the organization such as those who involved in the marketing or those who possess a technical skills.

Next dimension of flexible work arrangement is job sharing. According to Miller (2007) job sharing is an agreement among at least two or more number of employees to share the job among them. Employees those like to have job sharing as flexible work arrangement might be not have financial issues. Usually employee who practice job sharing will also share salary with whom the share the job. Even though this method was not preferred by employee but, past research stated that Goff, Mount and Jamison (1990), the benefits of having job sharing in term of the level of skills, ideas, working encouragement and experience will be double than normal or single employee as in job sharing they shared and exchanged knowledge between the employees in the process or during the job completion period Goff, Mount and Jamison (1990). In another study, it is found that job sharing is useful for the company where they can cut their cost by sharing the job especially during the recession (Walton, 1985).

Based on the findings of the study, a model that describes the results of the findings is depicted in Figure 1.1 below.

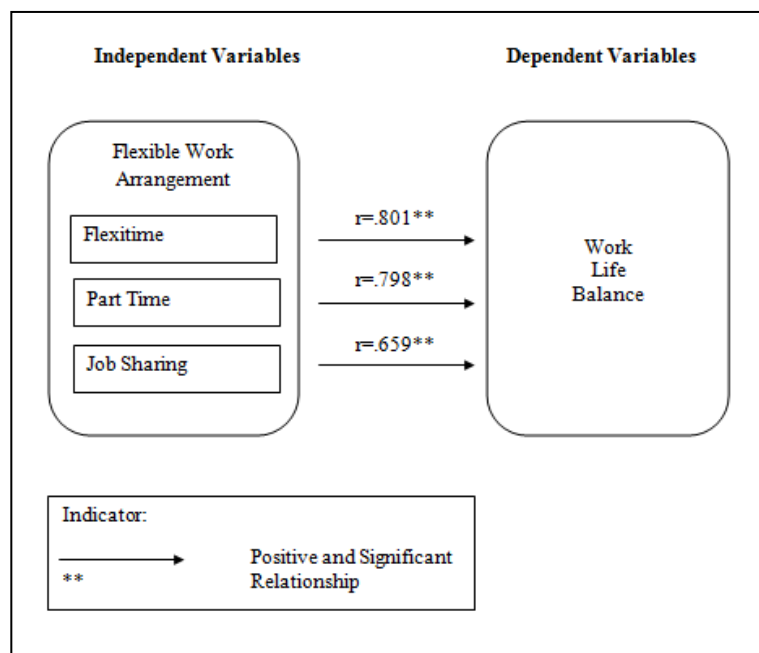


Fig. 1.1: Model of Flexible Work Arrangement and Work Life Balance.

C. Relationship between Flexible Work Arrangement and Work Life Balance while controlling for gender of the employees:

Partial correlation was used to explore the relationship between FWA and WLB, while controlling for scores on the gender of the employees. The comparison of two sets of correlation coefficients has been made to see whether controlling of gender have any impact on the relationship between FWA and WLB. There was a strong, positive partial correlation between FWA and WLB [$r=.86$, $n=144$, $p<.0005$], with high levels of FWA associated with high level of WLB. An inspection of the zero order correlation ($r=.86$) suggested that controlling for gender of employees had no effect on the strength of the relationship between these two variables. This suggests that the observed relationship between FWA and WLB is not due to the influence of gender of employees.

Table 1.4: Correlation (controlling for gender).

Control Variables		Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA)	Work Life Balance (WLB)	Gender
-none ^a	Correlation	1.000	.866	.039
	FWA			
	Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	.642
	df	0	142	142
	Correlation	.866	1.000	.018
	WLB			
	Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	.827
	df	142	0	142
	Gender			
Correlation	.039	.018	1.000	
Significance (2-tailed)	.642	.827	.	
Df	142	142	0	
Gender	Correlation	1.000	.866	
	FWA			
	Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	
	df	0	141	
	Correlation	.866	1.000	
	WLB			
Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.		
df	141	0		

a. Cells contain zero-order (Pearson) correlations.

Conclusion:

This research can be concluded that there is a strong relationship between the flexible work arrangement and work life balance. This method is well known and has been practiced by the international private universities and colleges at Kuala Lumpur. This can be done by properly arranging their daily schedules according to their suitability. This method also relates with the positive outcome of the job satisfaction, efficiency and productivity without facing any major issues in the workplace due to the stress in the employee's personal life. According to Susan (2003) there is a positive relationship between flexible work arrangement such as job sharing, part time and flexitime outcomes in some conditions, but sometimes an organization tend to ignore this relationship and cause a dissatisfaction of the employees (Susan, 2003).

Based on this research, it is important for the organization to understand the needs of their employees from the employee's perspective. This reveals the true desire of the employees and allows the organization to show their support to their employee such as using the flexible work arrangement because organizations which emphasize more on the flexibility of work arrangement for the employee will result in more creativity and increase productivity.

In addition, it opens opportunities to the employees regardless of their gender to improve and prove their skills by sharing their tacit knowledge and acquire new skills through job sharing. Other than that, this study helps to increase the employee's family awareness and understanding in terms of how flexibility work arrangement works which lead to the ability of employees to manage their routine life not only as an employee, but also as an individual who have a personal and family responsibility.

The people, the job, and the industry are all important considerations to examine before any judgment is made as to whether flexible work arrangements should be utilized. However, if an employer carefully examines the benefits and risks of an arrangement, and takes the time to see how the arrangement would fit with the organization, job, and employees.

Recommendation:

There are several recommendations for the organization, employee, government and other party that are interested to study and understand the relationship between flexible working arrangement and work life balance in depth in the future.

Based from the finding discussed, the study shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between the flexible work arrangement and work life balance. Therefore, it is recommended for the organization to provide or offer the flexible work arrangement method in the company to help employees to manage their working schedule and their personal activities schedules. This method can expose the employer and employees to a variety of methods for flexible work arrangement in the workplaces, and thus improve their organization.

This study can also help employees, specifically for working parents; the flexible work arrangement method can help the employees in many aspects not only in terms of time but also in their financial. This method also can help the employees to balance their time for work and for family responsibilities specifically when it includes the responsibility towards their children or elder care. It also gives an opportunity for employees to gain knowledge through knowledge sharing and additional skills through job sharing and part time. This additional skill can be used for their future career as an added value. Therefore, through this method, it allows

the employees to arrange their schedule according to their preferences, thus enhancing the performance in their work.

The flexible working arrangement method should be implemented by the government as one of the ways to control or reduce the traffic congestion. Using the flexible work arrangement method, the employees can arrange or have a different travelling time to their workplace. This method, it not only helps to control the environmental pollution and surrounding but also indirectly helps to reduce the accident rate on the road (Bernama, 2013).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express the deepest appreciation to all those who provided us the possibility to complete this research. Special thanks goes to the Research Management Institute of UiTM (RMI) for helping in the progression and smoothness by providing the funding needed to complete this research for which without it, would be impossible. The co-operation is much indeed appreciated. The authors also gratefully acknowledge the contribution by the Dean of Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Professor Dr. Zaini Abdullah for the ongoing support and insights, which contributed greatly to the quality of this study and outcomes and for actually making such an arduous process seem rather fun.

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