

# Flexible Work Arrangements and its Impact on Work-Life Balance

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## Abstract

“Flexible work arrangements” is a strategic part of the ecosystem of progressive organizations. There has been exponential increase in organizations that offer flexible work arrangements to their employees. Flexible work arrangements encompass various components which individually and collectively help in improving the overall wellbeing as well as work-life balance of the employees working in various organizations. The relaxations provided under flexible work arrangements improve the overall work-life balance of the employees significantly and help employees to become more productive and engaged. The objective of this paper is to elucidate the concept of flexible work arrangements, its components, the benefits accruing to the organizations and employees as a result of implementing flexible work arrangements, the relationship between flexible work arrangements and well being as well as the relationship between flexible work arrangements and work-life balance.

*Keywords:* Flexible Work arrangements, Benefits, Work-Life Balance, Stress, Wellbeing

## 1. Introduction

Flexible work arrangements that increase an employee’s options for flexibility on the job or allow alternate work schedules are becoming more popular. These programs are known as flexible work arrangements. Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) are defined as employer provided benefits that permit employees some level of control over when and where they work outside of the standard workday. Research on FWAs suggest they have positive outcomes for individuals such as lower work-family conflict and leads to increased well-being, work-life balance and positive outcomes for organizations. Flexible work arrangements lead to higher employee productivity, overall job satisfaction, and lower absenteeism. Flexitime

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and compressed workweeks are two of the most popular forms of flexible work arrangements. Many organizations are offering their employees “flexible work arrangements” to increase the well being and work-life balance. Scholars claim that flexible work practices facilitate well being and work-life balance for the employees. In this paper, “flexible work arrangements” are dissected into its various components and an effort will be made to establish their impact on employees’ work-life balance. In the conclusion, an inference will be drawn how “flexible work arrangements” holistically impact “work-life balance” of the employees (Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard, 2014).

## 2. Flexible Work Arrangements

“Flexible work arrangements” mean an employee’s ability to change the schedule and place of his work shift. It also entails flexi-time working, compressed working hours, job sharing, sabbaticals, telecommuting and childcare provisions. Each of the arrangement could be used individually; or they can be combined to complement each other (Chung, 2009).

### 2.1 Flexible Work Arrangement Components

- Flexi-time working empowers employees to decide their check-in and check-out time of their work shifts.
- Part-time working is one of the most common types of methods in which employees are agreeing to work less number of hours than the full-time.
- Compressed working hours allows employees to work his hours over four days in a week instead of five.
- Job-sharing is a mechanism under which two employees having the same job share the job and split the hours so that each one has a part-time position. They also split the remuneration, holidays and fringe benefits.

- Sabbaticals allow employees to take career breaks for various purposes.
- Telecommuting allows employees to do their job by using information and communication technology without being physically present at the workplace.
- Childcare options are a means to help employees’ with adequate care of their children when both the parents are at the workplace away from home. This may include crèche facility and day nursery for the children.

### 3. Benefits for the Organizations and Employees

Organizations introduce “flexible work arrangements” as part of their work-life balance policy. Flexible working helps organizations in attracting, recruiting, and retaining highly qualified employees. Flexible working leads to increased productivity, increased profitability, reduced employee turnover and absenteeism rate (Direction, 2008).

The various components of “flexible work arrangements” benefit employees in different ways. Flexi-time helps an employee to look after his personal activities without having to take time-off from work. Compressed working hours lead to additional free time for the employee during the working week. Job-sharing allows employees sufficient time to attend to their personal chores. Sabbaticals give employees career breaks and help them achieve work-life balance. Telecommuting allows employees to work from their home by using information and communication technology. This helps employees to look after their family and other personal chores. Childcare measures extended by employers help their employees achieve work-life balance, particularly in the backdrop of dual earning families. Therefore, all the benefits flowing from different components of the “flexible work arrangements” help employees in achieving work-life balance (Lewis and Humbert, 2010)

## 4. Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance can be defined as “satisfaction and good functioning both at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict”. Work-life balance is a wide ranging concept involving proper prioritization work and personal life. It is essentially balancing between responsibilities at workplace, family responsibilities and leisure. It is, however, challenging to achieve work-life balance in this unpredictable and rapidly changing world today (Lingard and Francis, 2009).

### 4.1. Relationship Between Flexible Work Arrangements and Work-Life Balance

In the foregoing part of this paper, an attempt has been made to define broad components of “Flexible work arrangements”. However, flexible work arrangements may mean different things to different people. In general, flexibility in one’s work schedule typically depends on the life stage of the person. Employees who ask for flexibility in their work schedules include mothers with young children, people reaching retirement age, but who do not want to quit completely yet, and adults who are caring for their aging parents. People also ask for flexible work schedule who are going through major life change. For example, someone who is dealing with a loss of close family member or someone who is sick and needs accommodations for doctor’s appointments and treatments may need to have a flexible schedule for a short period or indefinitely. The idea of having a flexible work schedule is seen as a positive motivating factor that can lead to increased happiness and overall wellbeing which in turn promotes better work-life balance. It may therefore be fair to infer that implementation of flexible work arrangements have a positive relationship with work-life balance Opportunity for flexible work arrangement influence productivity, performance, job satisfaction as well as organizational

commitment on the part of employees (Lyness and Judiesch, 2008).

Flexi-time gives opportunities to the employees to accommodate their personal needs (Lockett, 2012)

Part-time working empowers employees to work continuously while increasing their leisure time (Looker, 2011)

In compressed working, the employee can start work early and finish late so that they can build up additional hours and get a leave for a day from the work. This helps an employee enjoy a longer weekend / more time away from work without a reduction in pay. This promotes their mental and physical well being, which in turn leads to work-life balance (Lowe, 2006.).

In job-sharing, two employees share a job and split the remuneration as well as other fringe benefits proportionately. In case of personal exigencies, either one has the leeway to remain absent from work (Pruyne, Powell and Parsons, 2012.)

In telecommuting, all or part of the duties, tasks and responsibilities of the employees are carried out by them from their home using information and communication technology. It helps employees save on travelling cost and time, allow more flexibility in the working hours and consequently leads to increase in the job satisfaction (Kossek, Kalliath and Kalliath, 2012)

### 4.2 Wellbeing and Work-Life Balance

The definition of wellbeing is associated with health and wellness. It may be observed that all components of flexible work arrangements and the benefits for the employees flowing from them lead to physiological and mental wellbeing. Researchers have suggested that physiological and mental wellbeing significantly help to promote work-life balance (Baptiste, 2008).

## 5. Conclusion

Flexible work arrangements have been introduced in various organizations from time to time to improve the overall wellbeing of its employees so that their productivity increases and consequently the profitability of the organization. Research reveals that workplace flexibility empowers employees to control when, where, and how much time they spend working, so that they get adequate time to satisfy their non-work needs. This kind of arrangement induces a sense of mental peace and propels them to give their best to the organization. Each and every component of flexible work arrangement contributes to satiate those human needs, which leads to improved work-

life balance of the employees. This paper examined the relationship between flexible work arrangements, well-being and work-life balance. It showed that flexible work arrangements improve physiological and mental wellbeing of the employees. This helps employees to strike an optimum work-life balance which leads to greater output, commitment and loyalty towards the organization. It may therefore be inferred that prevalence of flexible work arrangement creates a positive impact on work and non-work lives of the employees. Looking to the benefits that accrue from a healthy work-life balance, the policy of flexible work arrangement is a win-win situation for both the employees as well as for the organizations.

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