

FULL PAPER

Critically analysing the concept of workplace flexibility and how it impacts employee and organizational performance: A case of the retail industry in India

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Workplace flexibility is considered as an important factor in organizational behaviour in terms of maintaining employees' productivity as well as organizational performance. This research has discussed the role of flexible working patterns in terms of improving employees' engagement and commitment towards organizations. It depicts the relationship between employees' engagement and organizational production improvement. Also, workplace flexibility is important for improving organizational performance by enhancing job satisfaction among the workers. However, the sedentary behaviour and undisciplined nature by employees have created barriers for the use of workplace flexibility. On the other hand, excessive work pressure by employers during flexible working arrangements has negatively influenced the performance of employees. Apart from this, the thematic description of the research has revealed the role of workplace flexibility in improving work-life balance regarding employees. Moreover, the narrative and relevant description have helped to highlight the role of workplace flexibility in enhancing employees' performance as a part of organizational improvement.

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Introduction

Workplace flexibility has represented a specific work agreement between employees and the workplace. According to this agreement, the standard arrangement of working can be changed by offering better accommodation to the employees. Flexibility at the workplace has mainly included changes in working hours, location, and pattern prominently. This strategic option helps to change the working circumstances and expectations of employees that are considered as a more valuable option for a business. The presence of workplace flexibility has played a

vital role in developing organizational attractiveness among workers as per [1].

Flexibility in working conditions have been intended to introduce a justified transformation for standard working patterns according to the consequences and aspects of workers as per [1]. In this regard, the potential aspects of workplace flexibility help enhance employee interest in the production of a company. It has positively influenced organizational performance in the market. Among the positive impacts of workplace flexibility are job satisfaction, work engagement, organizational improvement, and many others [1].

Besides this, in the present-day, the demand for flexible working conditions among workers has increased rapidly. Accordingly, for attracting workers, different organizations in India have focused on the introduction of flexible working patterns. As a trend of recent working activities in India, the demand for workplace flexibility has increased regularly. Different evidence has proven that workplace flexibility demand will increase by approximately 3 million within 2025 [2]. In India, workplace flexibility has been considered as an emerging demand among candidates in terms of searching for a job. In this arrangement, flexible departure and arrival timings and location have been considered as the prime factors. According to a survey, 26% and 22% of candidates in India have focused on flexible arriving-departure timing and location patterns respectively [3]. Approximately 40% of global candidates have concentrated on the 'schedule flexibility' approach as a prime factor of career decision making context [3].

As an example, Aditya Birla Group, a leading retail business in India, has offered flexible working arrangements for the employees in terms of maintaining job satisfaction and employees' engagement towards the organizational production as per [4]. Therefore, to maintain organizational attractiveness among the candidates, it is important to focus on some prime factors such as workplace flexibility. This working arrangement is also useful for increasing job satisfaction among the employees.

This study concentrated on the appraisal of the following hypotheses:

H1: Workplace flexibility is considered as a useful element for organizational success.

H2: Employees have been positively influenced by the arrangements of workplace flexibilities in a business.

H3: Increased demand for workplace flexibility is considered as an influential factor for organizational success and employee performance in the Indian retail sector.

Literature review

Driving factors for introducing workplace flexibility in a business

Different aspects play roles in introducing flexible working patterns in businesses. The attractiveness of workplace flexible arrangements has been mainly influenced by the satisfaction and demands of employees according to different situational contexts. To follow the recent trends of employees and attract the talent pool, organizations have concentrated on the introduction of flexible working arrangements. Offering a flexible pattern of working arrangements has been considered as a prime strategic approach for businesses in terms of enhancing employees individually [5]. Thus, attracting candidates can be considered as a prime driving factor for introducing flexible working patterns in a company.

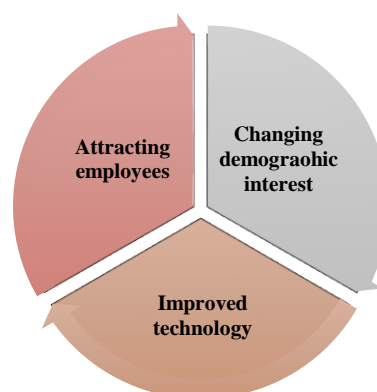


FIGURE 1 Driving factors of workplace flexibility

Besides this, focusing on employees' preferences is beneficial for employee retention. Therefore, highlighting employee retention is also another prime factor for introducing flexible working arrangements in the company as employees have been considered as one of the main stakeholders [6]. It has also been influenced by social collaboration between employees and organizations prominently. Apart from this,

changing perceptions regarding the demographic patterns are also considered as a prime driving factor for introducing flexible working arrangements at the workplace.

Further, the socio-demographic differences and distance between employers as well as employees have played a major role in introducing flexible working patterns in the firms for every individual worker [5]. Moreover, the improvement in communication, as well as information technology, has been considered as a major driving factor for the introduction of flexible working patterns in the firms considering individual workers [5]. So, the positive application of technology is beneficial for the shifting of tradition to modern flexible working patterns prominently.

Role of flexible workplace arrangements in the organizational performance

The presence of a flexible workplace approach is considered as a prime and effective component for measuring organizational performance prominently. It has left an important impact on enhancing organizational performance. Therefore, the inclusion of flexible working patterns is beneficial for managing business operations more efficiently. The increased interest of employees towards the flexible working pattern by the company has helped to increase its production [7].

Thus, it can be stated that flexibility in a working pattern has a positive influence on organizational production rate by improving productivity and sales volume simultaneously. Different factors play a significant role in developing organizational performance. In this context, intense support from employees and promoting employee satisfaction can enhance the development of organizational productivity [8].

Also, among a wide range of significant organizational behaviour, working flexibility is considered as a prime factor [8]. Besides, a

combination of flexible working patterns and time has helped to enhance job performance as well as job satisfaction levels among the employees [6]. The presence of job satisfaction is responsible for the improvement of employee engagement towards organizational productivity. Due to the presence of working flexible patterns, active participation of employees and fostering their engagement positively influence the organizational performance.

Impact of workplace flexibility on the performance of employees

Flexible working arrangements have been considered as an effective and beneficial agreement between employers and employees. In this agreement, flexible working hours, locations, patterns, and many other working contexts have been included. Enabling flexible working arrangements has created prominent and positive consequences within a firm [9]. This non-financial arrangement has helped to develop job satisfaction among the employees. In addition, changing as well as flexible working patterns have made the employees maintain a balance between working life and family life as per [9]. This aspect is essential for enhancing employee satisfaction that has led to an improvement in workers' performance. Accordingly, it can be declared that the presence and proper application of workplace flexibility are helpful for employee satisfaction and introduce a positive reputation regarding that company in the market. Thus, the positive reputation of a company associated with employee retention has helped to attract other candidates due to the workplace flexibility context. On the other hand, as an effective consequence of workplace flexibility, freedom, and improvement of work-life balance have positively influenced the performance of an employee [7]. In addition, changing location due to the flexible working approach, such as work from home (WFH) has exerted a positive

impact on the workers. As a result, absenteeism at the workplace has decreased. It offers employees to increase their potential engagement towards organizational production [7].

Therefore, an increase in job satisfaction, prominent work-life balance, positive concept towards organizational employee retention, and many other related factors have been considered as the impacts of workplace flexibility on workers' performance. In different organizations, the introduction of workplace flexibility has been considered as the prime focus for retaining employees [7]. It is also helpful for developing a positive and fair relationship between employers and employees [9]. Moreover, this flexible approach is considered as an organizational beneficiary for reducing work-life conflicts considerably [9].

Challenges of implementing flexible working arrangements in an organization

Apart from the useful impacts of workplace flexibility, it has some important limitations that have been considered as the negative impacts of flexible working arrangements in a firm. WFH or remote work as a part of workplace flexibility has introduced issues for employees as it increases the stress of family life [11]. The availability of workers from home and other locations more than office issues has put an additional burden on the employees due to the excessive working pressure.

Moreover, the introduction of sedentary behaviour among the employees due to the flexible working pattern has noticeably reduced working quality as well as organizational production [10]. The presence of flexible arriving, as well as departure timings has negatively influenced the discipline sense of employees. It has made a negative impact on the professional career of individuals and the production rate of a firm. Besides this, the negative beliefs of workers

regarding flexible working patterns also affect the culture of a workplace environment.

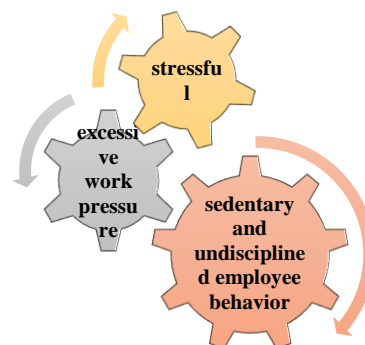


FIGURE 2 Challenges in workplace flexibility

It has also reduced interaction among the employees [11]. Thus, it has negatively influenced the professional communication approach of the workers. The sedentary and negative beliefs of employees towards the workplace flexibilities have reduced organizational production and disrupted the sales and profit margins. It is considered as an annual production loss for the organizations [11]. Clearly, continuous working at home rather than being at office has developed depression, anxiety, and other psychological issues due to the less interaction with other individuals [11].

Therefore, it can be highlighted that introduction of stress and depression, sedentary behaviour among employees, lack of professional communication, absence of discipline sense, and many other elements have been considered as the prime issues in introducing flexible working patterns in a firm. Moreover, separate organizational strategic approaches are not entirely compatible with introducing workplace flexibility.

Methods

Methods

For carrying out this research project, the researcher selected a deductive approach, which is appropriate for the requirement of this study, since it enabled the researcher to

build a logical framework of the subject matter. By following this, we generalized the extracted findings and a relationship has been established between variables and concepts [19]. Moreover, incorporating the philosophy of positivism is relevant to this study, since the researcher was able to identify norms and principles regarding workplace flexibility consummate to generate strategic and employee-friendly management decision. At the same time, the researcher deployed the descriptive type of research design for analysing the effectiveness of workplace flexibility and emphasized the existing phenomena of a working environment that improves personal efficiency. This type of design was supportive for the researcher to systematically and accurately describe the situation with the help of one or more than one variable [21].

Sampling

The sampling process was based on the foundation of the PRISMA framework. At first, the researcher collected 62 individual reading materials from various web sources, such as Pro Quest and, Indian Government-authorized Google Scholar [20]. After applying the inclusion and exclusion method, overall, 15 numbers of references were accessed for executing this research project. Along with this, the researcher relied on literacy sources as feasible choices that focused on workplace flexibility, employees’ job satisfaction, and organizational performance

Data collection

Boolean Table

TABLE 3 Boolean Table (*Prisma framework*)

Names of theme	Keywords	Used Boolean operators	Identified article
Workplace flexibility is useful for improving organizational performance	HRM, High-Performance Work System, Flexible work arrangements, Workforce feminization	(HRM and High-Performance Work System) or (Work System and Flexible work arrangements) or (Workforce feminization and HRM)	The study has addressed the issues centred on the illustration of British factories and conjectured that HPWs have reduced retaining the outcomes in exceedingly feminized workplaces than less feminized
Employees have been positively influenced by the introducing of flexible working arrangements in a firm	Flexibility, workplace, collaborative robot	(Flexibility and workplace) or (workplace and collaborative robot) or (Flexibility and collaborative robot)	The role played by time-based suppleness on conceptualizations of the individual–situation fit and job pleasure have been discussed here.
Introduction of workplace flexibility is important for introducing a relationship between employers and employees	engagement, employee happiness, engagement	(Flexitime and employee happiness) or (employee happiness and engagement) or (engagement and engagement)	The association of Interior workplace flexibility with the happiness of employees has illustrated here.

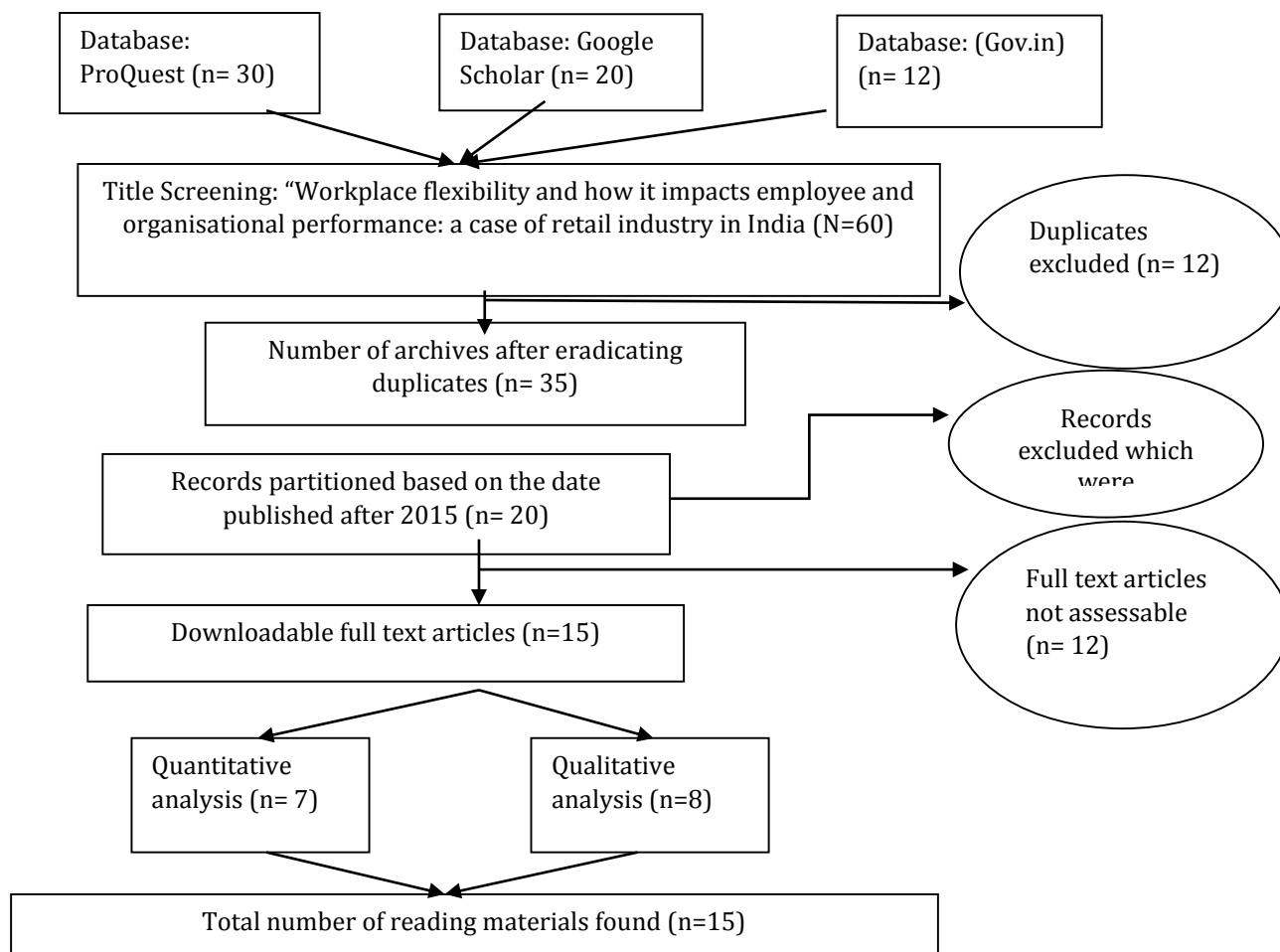


FIGURE 3 Systematic review

Ethical consideration

The norms mentioned in the “*Data Protection Act, (1988)*” were observed for preserving the confidentiality of the data [19]. The researcher retrieved the materials from authentic sources that guarantee validity and reliability.

Results

Theme 1: Workplace flexibility is useful for improving organizational performance

The prominent presence of flexible working approaches has had a positive impact on organizational performance as well as productivity. Additionally, norms and basic principles of workplace flexibility have been proved to produce more strategic and employee-friendly management decisions.

The introduction of flexible job assignments and other patterns have helped to increase employee engagement [15]. This increased engagement of employees towards the organization has contributed to enhancing the organizational production prominently. Improved organizational production has been influenced by engaged employee performance and intense dedications simultaneously [15]. Developmental practices of workplace flexibility have enhanced responsibilities among the workforce. Therefore, organizational production has been improved in an organized manner.

A satisfied working pattern of an organization has also resulted in positively influencing the workers that in turn has led to an improvement in organizational productivity [13]. It is useful for presenting

employee benefits in terms of satisfying the basic demands of the workforce. As a part of organizational behaviour, employee satisfaction plays a vital role to increase productivity [13]. Therefore, the presence of employee satisfaction is beneficial for improving more efficient production. The presence of satisfaction among the employees can encourage them to foster their engagement. As a result, it can boost organizational productivity.

Theme 2: Employees have been positively influenced by the introducing of flexible working arrangements in a firm

Flexibility in workplace services has created a great impact on employees. Control on work schedules by employees has also positively influenced the work-life balance, personal spacing, and other factors appropriately [12]. This pattern helps employees to cope up with the stressful aspects of jobs. Additionally, it also enhances the positive lifestyle behaviours of employees with more time for personal and family life [12]. Therefore, it can be stated that the increase of positive employee attributes due to workplace flexibility has helped to maintain employee retention rates prominently. Besides this, a flexible working environment has enhanced the personal efficiency of the workers due to the presence of job satisfaction [13].

The presence of flexible working aspects has helped to enhance productivity among the workforce due to job satisfaction and maintenance of personal preferences. The sustainable improvement of human resources has been positively influenced by the introduction and proper application of workplace flexibility prominently. In this term, workplace flexibility has represented an opportunity for employees to make choices for influencing their engagement with the organizational production tasks [13]. This flexible approach is useful for making decisions regarding the arrangements of

production as well as development with the aid of technologies. The presentation of an appropriate and positive interrelationship between organization and employees has been influenced by the ability and satisfied demands of employees [12]. It has also influenced the efficiency and productivity of workers by reducing absenteeism at the workplace.

Theme 3: Introduction of workplace flexibility is important for introducing a relationship between employers and employees

Maintenance of employee happiness is useful for developing an appropriate and positive relationship between employers and employees. The development of organizational commitment towards the workers and employee engagement to the organizations has been highly influenced by the application of workplace flexibility practices [14]. A relationship between personal management of employees and strategic aspects of human resource management has been proved to play a prominent role in introducing flexible working patterns at the workplace. Workplace flexibility has been classified into two approaches, internal and external. Internal flexible working patterns deal with the improvement of an employee as well as organizational performance simultaneously [14].

This workplace flexibility approach is beneficial for changing organizational perceptions towards employees by enhancing job satisfaction among the workforce. The significant and prominent relationship between internal workplace flexibility and job satisfaction can introduce a conflict-free and positive workplace environment at the firm [13]. Further, an introduction of flexible working practices has helped to develop more responsive changing patterns in the workplace. It helps reduce conflicts in the workplace. Therefore, it can be said that

presentation of flexible working patterns is beneficial for developing less biased and conflict-free relationships between employers and employees of an organization.

Discussion

The presence of workplace flexibility is considered as a prime and important element for improving and determining organizational success considerably. The presence of workplace flexibility can give rise to more commitment and trust among employees towards the organization. Flexible working patterns are useful for satisfying organizational objectives by facilitating employees' performance appropriately [15]. In India, different organizations have concentrated on employee satisfaction for maintaining workplace flexibility [16]. This flexible approach has led to enhancing innovative sense and productivity among the workforce. It has also produced an improvement in organizational productivity and profit margins simultaneously. The major focus of workplace flexibility is to shape employees' work-life balance for enhancing job satisfaction [16]. The involvement and engagement of satisfied employees have reportedly resulted in improving organizational performance. Engaged employees have concentrated on organizational production and innovative ideas as a prime opportunity for their career. In this context, organizations have been positively influenced by satisfied employees in terms of implementing workplace flexibility [7].

The introduction of workplace flexibility helps a business to improve employees' engagement positively. Therefore, it has been highlighted that flexible working patterns are responsible for encouraging employee performance [6]. The growing interest of employees in flexible office arrangements has increased the focus on adopting the WFH concept prominently. It has defined the

relocation of desk work concepts according to the expectations and demands of workers [17]. Accordingly, the advancement of communication, as well as information technology, has helped the employees to redefine office work from different locations rather than the office premises. It also helps to reduce the negative impacts of monotonous environments on employees' minds in the office. Besides this, the new public and personal workplace collaboration approach have positively influenced the engagement of employees towards organizational productivity [17]. Based on the context of Indian industries, it can be presented that the involvement of workplace flexibility has helped to motivate employees in terms of marinating work engagement [18]. Additionally, it has followed both temporal and operational flexibilities for satisfying the workforce. Temporal flexibility is effective in improving the work-life balance of employees. Moreover, operational flexibility helps control different situational contexts by employees. These are helpful for organizations in terms of reducing employee turnover [18].

The increased demand for workplace flexibility in the Indian retail sector has helped to enhance organizational success by managing employee retention properly. Most of the employees are recently considering workplace flexibility as a prime factor for selecting an organization. To meet workforce demands, most of the organizations in India have focused on introducing and applying flexible working patterns prominently [18]. This flexible option for office work has positively encouraged an employee to engage with a firm. Therefore, it has developed a prominent as well as positive impact among the workforce regarding the less employee turnover rate of the firm [13].

Conclusion

The presence of flexibility at the workplace has been considered as a positive factor in a

firm in association with attracting workers. The increased focus of employees on workplace flexibility has influenced the firms to introduce flexible working schedules and patterns for the workforce. It has positively influenced the engagement as well as the commitment of employees towards the company. Therefore, it has prominently as well as positively influenced both workforce and organizational performance simultaneously. However, the excessive focus on flexible working arrangements has been negatively influenced by the presence of sedentary and undisciplined behaviour among the employees. Moreover, it has affected professional communication among the workers. The thematic description along with a narrative presentation regarding the topic has helped to highlight the prime benefits of workplace flexibility for improving both organizational and employee performance. To reduce the negative impacts of workplace flexibility, it will be essential to introduce temporal flexible arrangements for employees. Along with that, organizations can emerge some specific regulations for the implementation of workplace flexibility by reducing excessive control by employees. On the other hand, employers will maintain basic timings for the employees for avoiding excess work pressure on the workforce during WFH or other flexible working patterns. Moreover, during working conditions, both employers and employees will maintain some professional codes of behaviour and working aspects prominently. It will help reduce the negative aspects of professional flexibility appropriately.

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