

Review on Flexible Work Schedule

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Abstract: *The business case for the provision of flexible work schedules is based on their ability to enhance employee recruitment and retention, job satisfaction and commitment and work-life conflict reduction. It makes intuitive sense that offering work life balance practices would attract individuals to an organization and would result in improved attitudes and behaviors of employees within the organization. However, the critical review of the literature on the flexible work schedule revealed that despite the provision of these schedules, employee take-up may be low due to concerns that employing work life practices will result in reduced employee advancement opportunities or perceptions as less committed to the organization. In addressing this issue, the need for supportive organizational culture, team work, proper communication and manager training may be at the forefront. By examining the types of flexible work schedules and supporting theoretical foundations, the article offered a critical review of the literature on flexible work schedules. It also looked at the conditions necessary for flexible work schedules to be successful and the possible results. There was further consideration of the challenges involved and therefore suggestion.*

Keywords: *Absenteeism, Employee Commitment, Flexible Work Schedules, Satisfaction and Work Life Practices.*

I. INTRODUCTION

A flexible work schedule[1] in this 21st Century is a significant issue. However, it wasn't until recently that these practices came to be perceived as beneficial to employees and employers alike. Studies supporting the benefits of flexible work schedules recognize the positive, albeit indirect, contribution to organizational profit of these practices. Organizations and employees have realized the potential benefits of the practices in creating a satisfied workforce; it is concerned with promoting employee well-being, reducing the rate of absenteeism, employee engagement and improving the behavior of citizenship in the organization. Ways of flexible work schedules include flexible work schedules in many ways such as teleworking, flexible hours, shortened work week, leave, job sharing, staggered retirement, contract work, part-time jobs.

A common form of flexible work schedule relates to the venue or place of work as regards flexibility at the workplace. Those consist of telework or flex position, which often combined informal teleworking with non-standard working hours. Employees work beyond their traditional organizational environment from a position within a telework or flex place plan. Telework or flex place is characterized as a flexible work schedule allowing employees to work in a variety of locations, usually using communication and information transmission technologies. While there are many forms of telework or flex space, there are four defining types that capture most

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of these: telecommuting, satellite offices, work centers in the neighborhood, and mobile workers. Telecommuters work regularly from home, and may or may not use technology in their jobs. Employees working outside the home and organization at satellite and neighborhood work bureau. Workers at satellite offices, however, are from a single organization; while workers at community work centers may be from multiple organizations sharing office space in a nearby suburban area rather than commuting to downtown. Such opportunities allow employees to engage in regular interactions with colleagues at work, while reducing commuting time and the need to buy urban office space.

On flexibility in the number of working days, this kind of flexibility is most often associated with the shortened workweek concept. This means relocating the time worked over the week into smaller and longer periods. Employees can work for longer hours for a few days in a shortened workweek, for example, for four 10-hour days instead of the usual five 8-hour days. Employees who have access to and use this type of flexibility[2] earn an extra day every week to spend their life abroad. Employers who adopt such a strategy throughout the company will recognize substantial cost savings as well as higher performance of employees. Furthermore, environmentally conscious companies can also produce fewer toxins and contaminants by going into this type of schedule of operation. In addition, there is increased productivity due to decreased nonappearance and turnover; it provides an inexpensive means of improving employee confidence and creative staff retention opportunities. Flexibility in the number of hour's employee's work or amount of work, this refers to flexibility in terms of the amount of workload or the amount of working time using some methods such as: Reduced time or workload which is any reduction in the total number of working hours for 40 hours per week in exchange for lower pay. It includes: Part time jobs under which employees are required to work for less than 35 hours in week; secondly there is job sharing under which two employees voluntarily share work responsibilities where each works less than full-time.

II. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

II.1. Border Theory:

A hypothesis attempts to explain how people manage to navigate between their lives within their families and on the job obligations and the distinctions between those realms as they try to strike a balance. The key aspect of this theory is the concept that there are two distinct worlds or spheres of work and family which however have an impact on each other. This is because there are generally different cultures both at the level of the family and at the level of the work, which means that an individual has to transit between these two cultures daily. While the transition might be slight in cases where acceptable behavior is more or less similar in both cases, there are instances where there is a massive contrast between the two spheres of an employee's life. This could be due to the fact that in both spheres, individuals are motivated by different things like income and at-work accomplishment and close relationships and family happiness. There are also distinctions between work and home that may be immediate, physical or psychological. These borders[3] might be temporal given the differences in time an individual cross to another domain or physical as elaborated by the walls of a workplace or home. Similarly, a border can be psychological in terms of the difference in thoughts, behavior patterns or emotions one has when in a given domain.

II.II. Spill over Theory:

The principle of Spillover[4] notes that general actions, feelings, attitudes and tension can be transferred from the realm of life to another. Thus, in the case of an adult working, thoughts, behaviors and attitudes can be easily transported from work to family and vice versa. Spillover can either be a spillover, negative or positive.

The type of conflicts it results in can be illustrated with negative spillover. Conflict between work and life can be typified into three categories: time-based conflict, strain-based conflict and behavior-based conflict. All of these issues usually sum up the problems that workers are facing when they try to negotiate between family and work. For example, strain conflict may be expressed by the differences caused by different behaviors within each domain or function. On the other hand, failure to adequately find time to attend to roles in both one's family and at work elaborates time conflict.

II.III. Social Exchange Theory:

The first type is the desire to reciprocate, which is the assumption that somebody will give back a favor or act because they feel obliged to pay back somebody. Reciprocity is expected to come in the second form of reciprocity. Expected reciprocity is the belief that, in the near future, if a person does something for another person, he or she should get some kind of benefit in return. Employees must behave according to the theory of social. Employees engage[5] on an ongoing basis in a give and take partnership with their employer whereby one party offers socio-emotional resources needed by the other in return for others they want. This relationship of exchange is maintained through principles of mutual reciprocity or gains that is to say, if you scratch my back, they will scratch yours and of confidence and respect.

II.IV. Signaling Theory:

By offering flexible work schedules, organizations show that they support employee's well-being by allowing them to attend to their personal needs such as child care or elder care, attendance to health matters like exercise and professional development. Employees can experience more flexibility in feeling supported by their organizations to cope with work family demands. This in turn will result in employee satisfaction[6] and commitment and higher productivity. The availability of flexible work schedules can result in feelings of power over work family issues and positive effects, which can help employees deal with conflicts between work and family.

III. NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULES

III.I. Quality Communication:

Continuous and advanced contact should be developed between employees, customers, partners, departments, and management. The management should also maintain adequate communication with employees on the work schedules, work locations, work progress and expected dates for completion of work. Lack of proper

communication[7] to employees and their supervisors of the availability of these practices may hinder their use and consequently their intended influence on organizational effectiveness.

A frequently cited issue in the implementation of flexible work schedules accounts is lack of use. Researches conducted by UK companies shows workers are often unaware of their right to flexible work schedules. Even if employees are fully informed of the available practices, many display a reluctance to use them. Relative to female employees, few men take advantage of family leave, instead choosing to take a vacation or other discretionary days off upon the birth of a child or other family event.

III.II. Supportive Organization Culture:

There must be a work place company culture that embraces and respects these activities for successful adoption and implementation of flexible work schedules. Flexible work arrangements must be assessed and valued both at the level of management and at the level of the employees. The idea that the use of flexible work schedules[8] would adversely affect their career prospects seems to be a strong de motivation. Working part-time is incompatible with promoting and accessing a range of higher status malignant occupations, the proportion of female part-time employees categorized as unprompted was 96.7 percent, and male part-time employees were similar in this data. This view is compounded by schedules corporate cultures.

III.III. Employee Involvement:

When employees have input into decision-making processes in their organization, initiatives are more likely to have their intended effect. Employee participation early in the process can also help build control of new initiatives, leading to a willingness to use new programs during implementation, and less resistance. Finally, empowering workers to provide input on assessment and improvement rather than simply communicating results and potential changes, promotes ownership feelings throughout the change process.

IV. OUTCOMES OF FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULES

Previously flexible work schedules were perceived to benefit only employees at the expense of the organization; however, research has since proved that these practices have a positive impact to both the employer and employee. Such benefits include: Job satisfaction and organization commitment, lower turnover intentions, reduced work family conflict, organization performance, employee growth and development, improved employee health and safety and employee job autonomy. Flexibility[9] is among the most commonly studied outcomes of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Scholars have defined job satisfaction as an affective or emotional reaction of an employee to a job, based on a comparison between actual results and desired results. Organizational engagement is the relative strength of the recognition and participation of a person within a given organization.

Employees with exposure to flexible work schedules show high morale and job satisfaction, as well as high levels of company loyalty, discretionary effort and commitment to organization. Flexible work arrangements are

possibly due to the belief of the workforce that their employers respect and are worried about them. This increases workers' control over their lives because of other opportunities to work at periods that are more conducive to personal needs. Moreover, it improves employee's perception about their employer and the overall positive feeling towards the employer which in turn imparts on organization commitment and employee job satisfaction. Although the provision of flexible work schedule is perceived to enhance job satisfaction and commitment, it is possible that the employee may derive satisfaction from other things such as compensation and promotion and not necessarily from these schedules.

V. CHALLENGES OF FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULES

A variety of problems have been found to have flexible work schedules. This helps companies to extend working hours, developing and maintaining time-keeping programs will always result in additional costs that may not necessarily be related to remuneration. This can include the electricity and water costs incurred during extended working hours. Therefore, the performance of these schedules would require proper assessment of the viability and sustainability of these services and appropriate budgeting in line with the expected costs. There is also a need for proper training of managers in areas relevant to the implementation, supervision and control of these schedules in order to boost the expertise and skills of managers in these related areas in order to enhance the achievement of the objectives of using these schedules.

In addition to the above, managers are likely to be more burdened with this type of arrangement, particularly in terms of communication; monitoring and scheduling of working time for employees. This is because the monitoring and departure of workers vary and therefore the management has to prepare with different schedules, during which they can supervise the employees. In fact, this is one of the reasons some managers do not want to accept this type of arrangement for work. In addition, managers and organizational leaders[10] may implicitly or explicitly discourage flexible work schedules owing to their reluctance to give up control. Therefore, the need for administrative preparation on the application and monitoring of workers using these schedules is crucial to the performance of these programmes. A part from this, there should be programmes specifying time periods where all the employees are expected at work stations to make it easier for communication and supervision. There is also need for the management to find out the type of jobs within the organization that will allow for flexibility since in most cases flexibility is easier to achieve in routine jobs as compared to non-routine ones.

VI. CONCLUSION

Flexible work practices are often associated with improved organizational performance. Making these practices available to employees appears to give characteristics of the employee that informs the utilization of these practices and through the positive employee outcome that arises from the provision of such schedules such as job satisfaction, commitment and reduced turnover among the employees. Nonetheless, it is important to investigate whether there is a direct positive correlation between flexible work arrangements and organizational efficiency, and it is generally

agreed that many flexible work activities, such as flexible working hours, telework and information assistance with dependent care programs, have low financial costs that are mainly correlated with program management and do not require extensive assistance. In addition to this it is necessary to address the principle of universality of these practices; it should be a common phenomenon in the organization that these practices are meant for both men and women. Without necessary changes, users of flexible work schedules will continue to be pre-dominantly women, men will continue to anticipate negative impacts from their use, and career-oriented individuals of both sexes will continue to think twice before using the practices offered. In addition to this, the concept of universality of these activities must be addressed; it should be a common phenomenon within the organization that these practices are intended for both men and women. Without the necessary changes, users of flexible work schedules will remain predominantly women, men will continue to anticipate negative impacts from their use, and career-oriented individuals of both sexes will continue to think twice before using the offered practices.

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