IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM)
e-ISSN:2278-487X, p-ISSN: 2319-7668. Volume 26, Issue 4. Ser. 2 (April. 2024), PP 31-36
www.iosrjournals.org

Pursuing Synergy: How Flexible Working Arrangements Help Balance Life, Boost Motivation And Promote Job Satisfaction

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Abstract:
Background*: This study investigates the influence of flexible work arrangements on work-life balance, motivation, and job satisfaction among educational personnel at a higher education institution in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era. The literature review underpinning the research examines the relationships between flexible work arrangements as an independent variable and the dependent variables of work-life balance, motivation, and job satisfaction, formulated as research hypotheses.*
Materials and Methods*: The study employed a convenience sampling technique, surveying 110 educational personnel who had experienced flexible work arrangements during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently returned to normal operations. Data were collected through an online questionnaire and analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). The variables of flexible work arrangements, job satisfaction, motivation, and work-life balance were measured reflectively.*
Results*: The findings reveal that flexible work arrangements positively impact work-life balance, motivation, and job satisfaction in the post-pandemic period.*
Conclusion: *Flexible work arrangements exert the most substantial direct influence on work motivation compared to job satisfaction and work-life balance. These results indicate that changes in flexible work arrangements will have a more pronounced effect on enhancing employee work motivation.*
Keywords: *Flexible working arrangements, work-life balance, motivation, job satisfaction*

Date of Submission: 22-03-2024 Date of Acceptance: 02-04-2024

I. Introduction

Organizations invest in and prioritize their human resources for the future sustainability of the business. The role of employees in an organization is very important because they are human resources or intangible assets that have the potential to achieve the organization's vision, mission and productivity. Human Resources is not just an administrative function, but a strategic business partner in fulfilling the role of business development[1]. The exceptional situation described as a pandemic due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus and for health and safety reasons, is causing business actors and service providers, including education, to adapt in the implementation of activities and services to stakeholders, which are becoming activities within networks.

According to Robbins and Judge[2], managing people is as difficult in difficult times as it is in good times. In good times, it is important to understand how to reward, satisfy and retain employees. In difficult times, issues of decision-making, stress and coping come to the fore. Changes and innovations that arise from adapting to the constraints of the Covid-19 pandemic are adaptations of employee working arrangements that allow employees in different companies to work flexibly, such as working from home, working remotely or working both in the office and at home (hybrid). This is part of flexible working arrangements (FWA). Formally defined, FWA is a way of working that allows work to be carried out outside the usual time and/or place of a standard working day[3]. FWA is also defined as the performance of work-related tasks from a location other than an office, accompanied by technical support such as technology[4].

Organizations that implement FWA understand the dynamic change and flexible working model that enables employees to achieve a good work-life balance, resulting in good performance[5]. WLB occurs when individuals are able to manage their responsibilities between work, family and other commitments so that there is no conflict between personal life, career and work. WLB is expected to create a better quality of life for employees because they do not spend all their time at work[6]. With FWA, organizations hope that employees will feel more satisfied, engaged, motivated and productive at work[7]. The purpose of implementing FWA and WLB is to achieve employee job satisfaction.

Practitioners in the academic environment are facing a new reality during the pandemic with the closure of face-to-face activities on campus and the shift of lecture practices to various online platforms. Teachers and higher education staff, as well as students, are practicing social distancing by working and studying from home[8]. The application of FWA to educational staff in one of the universities that is the subject of this research is carried

out as an adaptation to a pandemic situation with restrictions on room capacity and also on the number of office staff working from home.

This study discusses how faculty members perceive the company in one of the higher education institutions that has its main campus in Jakarta and study programs outside the main campus such as in Malang, Bandung and Semarang. FWA implemented by the company during the pandemic and readjustment in the post-pandemic period is related to employee well-being. WLB, work motivation and job satisfaction determine the company's ability to manage employees during the difficult pandemic and readjustment in the post-pandemic period. FWA is expected to have a positive effect on WLB, work motivation and job satisfaction during the pandemic and post-pandemic period.

II. Material And Methods

The study uses quantitative research with the dependent variables work-life balance, motivation and job satisfaction being dimensions that can be operationally defined in different ways, one of which is the condition of flexible working arrangements.

Study Design: The study used a complex research design, which is research with multiple dependent variables, driven by the researcher's curiosity about how what they see affects the different things it affects, known as multi-dependent variables[9]. Hypotheses were tested using SmartPLS 3and analyzed using structural equation modelling (SEM). The variables of FWA, job satisfaction, motivation and WLB were measured reflectively.

Study setting: The subjects of the study were employees who worked with FWA during the Covid-19 pandemic and returned to normal conditions after the pandemic. The subjects of this study were educational staffs outside the main campuses in Malang, Bandung, and Semarang of one of the higher education institutions in Indonesia with a main campus in Jakarta.

Duration of the study: The study was conducted after the Covid-19 pandemic had subsided in September 2023, when lectures were fully face-to-face. Data were collected in December 2023.

Sample size: 110 educational staff.

Sample size calculation: The study population consisted of 150 educational staff in an off-campus higher education institution responsible for supporting administrative, developmental and technical services that support the educational process. These educational staff include admissions officers for new students, course administration, facilities management, librarians, laboratory staff, development and other technical services. The sampling technique used in this study is convenience sampling, which is a non-probabilistic sampling technique. Researchers use convenience sampling with the consideration that the sampled respondents are the closest group of people that can be accessed and reached. The number of samples taken is five times the number of units[10]. In this study, 22-item questionnaires were distributed to respondents, giving a sample size of 110 for the survey.

Type and technique of data collection: Primary data collection was done using an online questionnaire or Google form, distributed in the form of a link through online communication such as WhatsApp. This method of distribution makes data collection efficient and ensures that respondents only have to complete the questionnaire once. The questionnaire was distributed according to the criteria set by the researcher, which resulted in 110 respondents. Of the number of respondents targeted to complete the questionnaire, 92% of the questionnaires were completed in full or 102 questionnaires were collected where the data will be further processed for data analysis.

Operational variable: FWA variables use Albion instruments[11]. The Flexible Work Options Questionnaire (FWOQ) is a measurement tool consisting of six statement items relating to the category of adjusting working conditions without loss of pay. WLB refers to Hayman's questionnaire[12] in Mas-Machucha[13] and includes work interference with personal life (WIPL), perceived time adequacy, time for leisure activities, social benefits. Work motivation refers to Herzberg's motivational categories in Robbins & Judge[14] and includes achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility and advancement. Job satisfaction is based on Hirschfeld's Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire[15] which has been shown to be valid and reliable in assessing intrinsic, extrinsic and overall job satisfaction.

Hypotheses of the study

Hypothesis 1: Flexible working arrangements will affect work-life balance.
Hypothesis 2: Flexible working arrangements will affect motivation.
Hypothesis 3: Flexible working arrangements will affect job satisfaction.

Statistical analysis

The analysis employed descriptive statistical methods to determine the distribution of respondents' answers through measures of central tendency (mean) and dispersion (standard deviation). Inferential statistics were conducted using Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) to analyze the influence between variables. The SmartPLS 3 software was utilized for SEM-PLS analysis, a multivariate statistical technique for estimating the effects of variables simultaneously, aimed at prediction studies, exploration, or development of structural models[16].

The evaluation in SEM-PLS consisted of three components[17]: measurement model evaluation, structural model evaluation, and goodness-of-fit evaluation. For estimation based on hypothesis testing, the second-order approach was employed. In the repeated indicator approach, manifest indicators from first-order constructs were reused in second-order constructs. Essentially, in this approach, the second-order construct can be measured directly using all manifest variables from the first-order coefficients [18]. The variables of flexible work arrangements, job satisfaction, motivation, and work-life balance were measured reflectively.

The evaluation of the reflective measurement model measures the goodness of causality between variables and measurement items using criteria: (1) Outer loading or loading factor (LF) describes the degree of validity of items in measuring variables. The recommended value according to Hair[19] with an LF value ≥ 0.70 is acceptable, another opinion according to Chin[20] the LF value ≥ 0.50 is acceptable. In this study, a more moderate Chin considers LF ≥ 0.50 to be acceptable provided that CR and AVE are met. If the value is less than 0.5, the item is less valid and is therefore removed and re-estimated. (2) Composite reliability (CR) is a measure that describes the degree of internal reliability, indicated by a minimum value of 0.70 according to Hair[21], which means that the measuring instrument is consistent or reliable in measuring variables. (3) Average variance extracted (AVE) is a measure of convergent validity, or the extent to which the total measurement items represent variable measurements. The AVE explains the amount of variation in the measurement items contained in the variables. According to Hair[21], the minimum AVE value is 0.50. (4) Discriminant validity describes the extent to which the construct created is statistically different from other constructs. Discriminant validity is tested at the indicator level using cross-loadings and at the variable level using the Fornell-Lackner criterion, which compares the square root of the AVE with the correlation between variable. The measure of discriminant validity is the Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), with a recommended value of less than 0.90. The HTMT is the ratio of the heterotrait (average correlation between items measuring different variables) to the square root of the geometric monotrait multiplication (correlation between items measuring the same variable).

III. Result

The number of respondents who completed the questionnaire was 102, or 92% of the target sample of 110 educational staff. The profile of respondents in this study is predominantly 31-35 years old (41.2%), male (54.9%), married/ever married (52%), no children (60.8%), undergraduate education (73.5%), 4-6 years of service (31.4%), working more than 40 hours per week (91.2%) and employed (87.5%).

The questionnaire consisted of five questions and found that the majority of respondents in the post-pandemic state did not feel work-life balance (55.9%), but had higher work motivation (78.4%) and job satisfaction (72.5%). When implementing flexible working arrangements during the pandemic, the majority of respondents needed more than a year to get used to them (55.9%) and felt that flexible working arrangements still needed to be implemented after the pandemic (89.2%).

Measurement Model Evaluation

After the data has been processed by the SmartPLS 3 application, the Loading Factor (LF) results are checked for a value below 0.5. If the value is less than 0.5, the measurement item is less valid. The FWA variable is measured by six valid measurement items with outer loading values between 0.764-0.943, which shows that the six measurement items are highly correlated in explaining flexible work arrangements. The reliability of the FWA variable is acceptable with a composite reliability value of 0.946 > 0.70 and convergent validity with an AVE value of 0.746 > 0.50. Among the six valid measurement items, FWA appears to be more strongly indicated by FWA5 (LF = 0.943), namely workload management, where companies that practice FWA are important for employees to manage variations in workload and responsibilities performed.

Job satisfaction variables are measured by five valid measurement items with external loadings between 0.678-0.861, indicating that the five measurement items are highly correlated in explaining job satisfaction. The level of reliability of the job satisfaction variable is acceptable with a composite reliability value of 0.887> 0.70 and an AVE convergent validity of 0.614> 0.50. Among the five valid measurement items, job satisfaction appears to be stronger, as indicated by JobSat3_Eks1 (LF = 0.861), namely company policy, where company policy supports employee job satisfaction.

The motivation variable is measured by five valid measurement items with an external loading value between 0.698-0.826, which shows that the five measurement items are strongly correlated in explaining work motivation. The level of reliability of the work motivation variable is acceptable with a composite reliability value of 0.883> 0.70 and a convergent validity AVE value of 0.602> 0.50. Among the five valid measurement items, work motivation seems to be stronger as indicated by Motiv4_Res (LF = 0.826), namely responsibility for task success, and Motiv3_WIS (LF = 0.820), namely employee innovation to improve task success.

While the WLB variable is measured by six valid measurement items with an outer loading value between 0.575-0.799, which shows that the six measurement items are strongly correlated in explaining work-life balance. The level of reliability of the WLB variable is acceptable with a composite reliability value of 0.876> 0.70 and a

convergent validity AVE value of 0.543> 0.50. Among the six valid measurement items, WLB seems to be stronger, as indicated by WLB1_WIPL1 (LF = 0.799), i.e. the workload does not complicate the employee's private life.

Hypothesis test results

Table 1 shows the following hypothesis test results.

Table 1: Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis	Path	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	95% Confidence Interval Path Coefficient		T-Statistic	P-Value	Conclusion
				Lower limit	Upper limit			
H1	FWA → Work Life Balance	0.312	0.346	0.192	0.505	2.416	0.016	Accepted
H2	FWA → Motivation	0.507	0.526	0.352	0.686	5.883	0.000	Accepted
H3	FWA → Job Satisfaction	0.373	0.400	0.231	0.575	4.267	0.000	Accepted

The first hypothesis (H1) is accepted, namely that there is a significant effect of FWA on WLB, as indicated by the path coefficient = 0.312 and p-value 0.016 <0.05. Any FWA implementation policy will increase WLB. At the 95% confidence interval, the effect of FWA on increasing WLB is between 0.192 and 0.505.

The second hypothesis (H2) can be accepted, namely that there is a significant effect of FWA on work motivation, as shown by the path coefficient = 0.507 and p-value 0.000 <0.05. Any FWA implementation policy will increase employee motivation. At the 95% confidence interval, the magnitude of the effect of FWA on increasing work motivation is between 0.352 and 0.686. This means that when an FWA policy is in place, its effect on increasing work motivation can be as high as 0.686.

The third hypothesis (H3) can be accepted, namely that there is a significant effect of FWA on job satisfaction, as shown by the path coefficient = 0.373 and p-value 0.000 <0.05. Any FWA implementation policy can increase employees' job satisfaction. At the 95% confidence interval, the effect of FWA on job satisfaction is between 0.231 and 0.575.

IV. Discussion

Based on the test results of all hypotheses that have been proven, the practice of FWA during and after the pandemic, as perceived by employees, affects job satisfaction, work motivation and work-life balance. The first hypothesis, that FWA affects WLB, is supported and has a positive influence, which is also consistent with the findings of Zalafi's research[22], where the positive application of FWA leads to a balanced WLB, so that it does not make it difficult for employees to make individual ethical decisions in balancing workload and personal life roles outside of work. Employees with WLB are supported by companies that practice FWA, demonstrating the importance of an organization establishing structures and policies that can improve employees' WLB[23].

The research findings support the study conducted by Caringal-Go et al.[24] which shows the practice of FWA, namely teleworking. Their research found that employees' strategies for achieving WLB were varied and included physical strategies (managing time, work and workspace), cognitive strategies (health care and dividing time between work and rest. and entertainment) and relational strategies (time for family and virtual communication with colleagues). This is in line with the findings of previous research by Stefanie[25], which explains that FWA practices have a positive impact, influencing WBL by providing a sense of security and balance in carrying out work from home, influencing job satisfaction by achieving work goals and encouraging communication with colleagues, and influencing loyalty by providing a sense of pride and appreciation from the company.

Researchers believe that FWA practices during the pandemic and post-pandemic have had an impact on the achievement of WLB among education staff, where staff have had to manage variations in workload and responsibility for completing work and their roles in their personal lives. According to Botha[26], this is also a challenge for staff in adapting to new working patterns and adapting resources to support the implementation of WLB, such as teleworking or WFH.

From the definition of WLB and the profile of the respondents, 41.2% were aged 31-35 years and the majority of 53% were married, indicating that there is an understanding of the term life balance in the characteristics of these respondents as personal satisfaction or happiness in carrying out employee positions at work and individual positions in personal life and having a family. If employees are satisfied and happy with their work and working conditions, it means that their life balance is fulfilled.

The second hypothesis, that FWA influences work motivation, is proven and has a positive influence, which is also in line with Wellinger[7] where the implementation of flexible work influences a significant increase in employee behavior at work, including work motivation, job satisfaction, employee commitment and

productivity. Although Wellinger[7] found no change at manager level in terms of engagement and motivation in remote working patterns. However, at the employee level, job satisfaction, motivation, engagement and work productivity increased significantly as a result of remote working.

Researchers believe that FWA practices during the pandemic and post-pandemic have an impact on achieving work motivation among education staff, where staff are motivated to create new things to adapt work patterns and are focused on the success of their tasks. Furthermore, in FWA practices, staff are motivated because they have authority and a sense of responsibility for their work. According to Davidescu[27], new types of workspaces in flexible work arrangements are very popular with employees and are seen as an optimal solution for improving organizational performance, self-development, job satisfaction and overall work motivation. This poses a challenge for human resource management in designing sustainability policies that can lead to increased job satisfaction and organizational performance.

The third hypothesis, that FWA affects job satisfaction, is supported: the greater the organizational support for FWA practices, the greater the employee satisfaction. This is in line with Kiran & Khurram's research[28] which shows that flexible working hours have a positive relationship with employee commitment, organizational affective commitment, employee happiness and job satisfaction at work. Wadhawan[29] also explains that there is a positive impact of FWA on employee job satisfaction in the IT sector, which in turn influences employee WLB and psychological well-being.

Giovanis[30] research explains that the introduction of FWA (teleworking and flexi time) has a positive effect on job satisfaction and employee loyalty. Important factors supporting job satisfaction include performance-related pay, the quality of the relationship between manager and employee, and the target market area. Research confirms that the use of internet and computer access is an important tool to support working from home.

Work environment conditions and personal factors influence job satisfaction[31]. This is consistent with Msuya & Kumar's[32] findings that FWA has a positive impact on employee performance and allows employees to meet individual and family needs without compromising employer responsibilities. This leads to satisfaction, commitment and increased performance. The impact of FWA on employee performance is achieved through job satisfaction, commitment, engagement and productivity. Employees are satisfied when organizations provide flexibility through negotiation, policies, regulations and guidelines.

V. Conclusion

The implementation of flexible working arrangements affects the work-life balance. Based on the perception of the respondents or educational staff, it shows that the implementation of FWA requires one year of getting used to it and they feel that there are no problems in carrying out work from home or outside the workplace because they get the opportunity to manage variations in workload and responsibility for completing work and spending time with family or for personal life.

The implementation of flexible working arrangements has an impact on work motivation as respondents have been able to create new things to adapt their working patterns and focus on the success of their tasks. In addition, employees are motivated by FWA practices because they have authority and a sense of responsibility for their work. The implementation of flexible working arrangements has an impact on job satisfaction because, according to the respondents, the implementation of FWA is supported by company policy so that employees feel satisfied with their jobs.

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