

FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS IN IMPROVING THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF WOMEN WORKING IN PRIVATE SECTOR OF MALAYSIA: A CONCEPTUAL PAPER

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of the Flexible Work Arrangement (FWAs) on the work-life balance of women employees within private sector organization. FWAs plays a key role in addressing the realities of today's workplace for women's work life balance. In line with this reasoning, this study examined the relationship between impacts of FWAs such as flexible work hours, remote work, and job sharing and improving women work life balance in Private sector of Malaysia. This study will identify the objectives and research questions as well as examines the relevant hypothesis which focuses on three primary factors contributing to women's work-life balance such as flexible work hours, remote work, and job sharing. At the end of the study, three hypotheses will be examined to validate the research's objectives and questions. To collect data on factors affecting women's work-life balance within specific demographic profiles. This study employs a quantitative approach that includes survey questionnaires. The research methodology involves the distribution of questionnaires to working women within the private sector in Malaysia. The study found that FWAs have a significant impact on women's work-life balance in the private sector in Malaysia. This underscores their vital role in improving the lives of career women and contributing to organizational success.

Keywords

Flexible Work Arrangements, Flexible Work Hours, Remote Work, Job sharing, Work Life Balance

1. Introduction

In recent years, the platform of work has undergone a profound transformation with significant changes in the way organizations and employees interact. Among these transformations, FWAs have emerged as a key driver of workplace flexibility and adaptability. FWAs encompass various practices, such as flexible work hours, remote work, job-sharing, part time, compress work weeks along with others.

According to ter Hoeven & van Zoonen (2015), the steadily increasing significance of flexible working strategies can be defined to a variety of factors, including market globalization, the development of new technology, quick changes in the labour market, and boosted market competitiveness. FWAs provide employees with more control over how, when, and where they

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fulfill their job responsibilities. These arrangements meet the needs of the modern workforce and have the potential to address long-standing work-life balance challenges, especially among working women in the private sector.

Furthermore, Yadav & Dabhade (2014) studied that work-life balance is a concept that refers to the equilibrium or balance that individuals seek to achieve between their professional work and personal lives. It is the state of equilibrium where a person effectively manages their responsibilities at work while also enjoying a fulfilling personal life outside of work. Moreover, achieving a healthy work-life balance is essential for the overall well-being, mental health, and satisfaction of individuals. In other word, flexible working can be utilized as an advantage capability-spanning resource to help workers, especially women to adjust their employment to family obligations. Striving to excel both at work and in family life can increase stress and potentially impact physical and mental health and reduce job satisfaction. Therefore, understanding how FWAs can improve work-life balance is crucial.

1.1 Problem Statement

Women working in Malaysia's private sector face work-life balance challenges, balancing family, societal expectations, and career goals. While women play a substantial role in the country's economy, they often struggle to achieve work-life balance, leading to stress, mental health concerns, work-family conflicts, and reduced job satisfaction. According to a study by the Department of Statistics Malaysia, the female labor force participation rate in Malaysia was 55.4% in 2023, the cause of women's unbalance between work and personal lives is due to the pressure to excel in both their careers and family life, which can lead to increased stress levels, potential physical and mental health concerns, and diminished job satisfaction.

The report from Bizjournals.com (2023) found that 67% of female parents experienced moderate to severe burnout due to work-life imbalance. In a survey of over 3,200 female professionals in various industries, two-thirds of female parents felt personal guilt for not doing more at home due to their workloads, 60% experienced professional guilt for not performing as well as before having children, 54% believed their gender influenced them being overlooked for promotions, and the top reason for women leaving or considering leaving their jobs was compensation. As a result of the arguments, this study aims to investigate how the relationships between flexible work hours, remote work, job sharing, and work-life balance among working women in Malaysia in the private sector of Malaysia.

1.2 Research objectives

RO1: To explore the impact of **flexible work hours** in improving the work-life balance of women working in private sector of Malaysia.

RO2: To explore the impact of **remote work** in improving the work-life balance of women working in private sector of Malaysia.

RO3: To explore the impact of **job sharing** in improving the work-life balance of women working in private sector of Malaysia.

1.3 Research questions

RQ1: Is there a significant relationship between flexible work hours and improving the work-life balance of women working in private sector of Malaysia?

RQ2: Is there a significant relationship between remote work and improving the work-life balance of women working in private sector of Malaysia?

RQ3: Is there a significant relationship between job sharing and improving the work-life balance of women working in private sector of Malaysia?

1.4 Scope of the study

This study aims to explore how FWAs impact the work-life balance of women in the private sector of Malaysia. The study will focus on the effects of three independent variables such as flexible work hours, remote work, and job sharing. This research will use a quantitative approach of the descriptive research study which conducted in a natural work environment. Data will be collected through questionnaires method to identify the significant influences of the research dependent variable against the independent variables. The main objective of this research is to identify the useful information that can be helpful to the research. The findings of this study can be used to improve policies and practices that enhance work-life balance for women in the Malaysian private sector.

1.5 Limitations of the study

There could be errors in the data as it relied on surveys, which might make participants provide inaccurate information about their work-life balance. Also, there might be unanswered questions, and the study didn't randomly select women for the research, which can affect the sample size. Moreover, the study only looks at women in private sector jobs, so it may not be relevant for other groups of workers or different types of organizations. This means there could be some issues that the research didn't uncover. Future studies should explore these unexplored aspects of FWAs and employee well-being. It might be useful to use qualitative or mixed research methods to get a deeper understanding of how FWAs affect the work-life balance of women in the Malaysian private sector.

1.6 Fundamental Theory

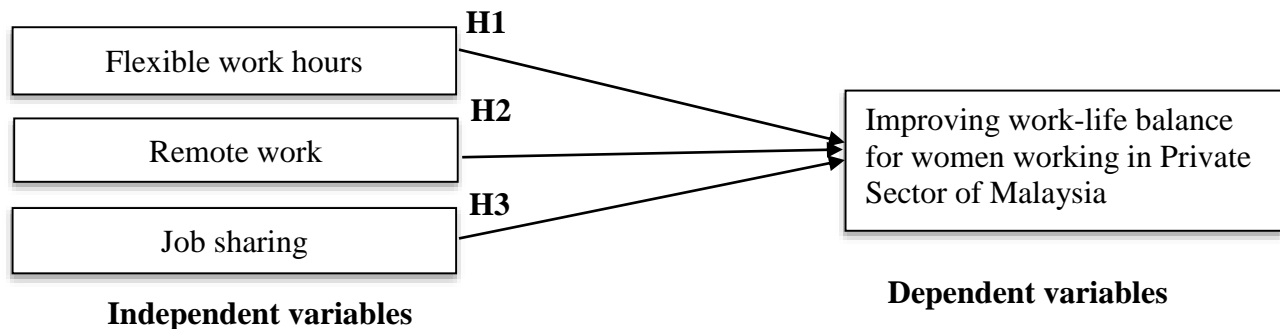
1.6.1 Role Conflict Theory

The research described that the role conflict hypothesis suggests that there may be some tension between the demands of one's duties within the home and one's job at work (Palomino & Frezatti, 2016). This theory suggests that when it comes to balancing family and work, it's like a give-and-take situation because people have limited time and energy. So, if employees have more family responsibilities, they might have less time and attention for work, which could affect their job performance. The term "role" means people can have multiple responsibilities in their work, family, and community. This can create conflicts when one function's duties conflict with another (Yusaini et al., 2023). According to Kossek, E. E., & Thompson, R. J., (2016), firms can reduce

the stress that could arise from conflicting job expectations by increasing the time and geographical ranges to handle work and nonwork demands by using organizational flexibility.

1.7 The Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Conceptual framework, the dependent variable is improving the work life balance. The independent variables are flexible work hours, remote work and job sharing. Work life balance therefore depends on the independent variables.



1.8 Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between flexible work hours and improving the work-life balance of women working in Malaysian private sector.

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between remote work and improving the work-life balance of women working in Malaysian private sector.

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between job sharing and improving the work-life balance of women working in Malaysian private sector.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

A research design serves as the roadmap for collecting, measuring, and analyzing data. All of these are vital for addressing the research objectives and questions related to the impact of FWAs on the work-life balance of women in the Malaysian private sector. As highlighted by Sy et al., (2020), the research design plays a crucial role in managing the research process and methodology, outlining how essential information will be obtained, guiding data review, and steering the overall research project.

2.2 Target population

In the second quarter of 2023, Malaysia's population was estimated at 33.24 million, with a projected increase in the labor force participation rate for individuals aged 15-64, from 69.6% in 2022 to 70.0% in 2023. The number of employed persons has been steadily rising and reaching a

total of 16.34 million (Malaysia, n.d.). In 2023, women make up 56.3% of the employed population in Malaysia, but there's no specific data available for the number of women in the private sector workforce. This study focuses on the private sector due to a lack of research on work-life balance among women employed in the public sector of Malaysia.

2.3 Sampling Size and Measurements

Table 1: Krejcie and Morgan’s Table

N	Z	N	Z	N	Z
10	10	230	146	1300	281
15	14	230	146	1300	281
20	18	240	146	1400	281
25	24	230	152	1500	286
30	28	240	152	1600	291
35	32	250	158	1700	296
40	36	260	162	1800	301
45	40	260	167	1900	306
50	44	260	169	2000	312
55	48	270	173	2100	317
60	52	280	177	2200	322
65	56	280	179	2300	327
70	60	290	183	2400	332
75	64	300	187	2500	337
80	68	310	191	2600	342
85	72	320	195	2700	347
90	76	330	199	2800	352
95	80	340	203	2900	357
100	84	350	207	3000	362
110	88	360	211	3100	367
120	92	370	215	3200	372
130	96	380	219	3300	377
140	100	390	223	3400	382
150	104	400	227	3500	387
160	108	410	231	3600	392
170	112	420	235	3700	397
180	116	430	239	3800	402
190	120	440	243	3900	407
200	124	450	247	4000	412
210	128	460	251	4100	417
220	132	470	255	4200	422
230	136	480	259	4300	427
240	140	490	263	4400	432
250	144	500	267	4500	437
260	148	510	271	4600	442
270	152	520	275	4700	447
280	156	530	279	4800	452
290	160	540	283	4900	457
300	164	550	287	5000	462
310	168	560	291	5100	467
320	172	570	295	5200	472
330	176	580	299	5300	477
340	180	590	303	5400	482
350	184	600	307	5500	487
360	188	610	311	5600	492
370	192	620	315	5700	497
380	196	630	319	5800	502
390	200	640	323	5900	507
400	204	650	327	6000	512
410	208	660	331	6100	517
420	212	670	335	6200	522
430	216	680	339	6300	527
440	220	690	343	6400	532
450	224	700	347	6500	537
460	228	710	351	6600	542
470	232	720	355	6700	547
480	236	730	359	6800	552
490	240	740	363	6900	557
500	244	750	367	7000	562
510	248	760	371	7100	567
520	252	770	375	7200	572
530	256	780	379	7300	577
540	260	790	383	7400	582
550	264	800	387	7500	587
560	268	810	391	7600	592
570	272	820	395	7700	597
580	276	830	399	7800	602
590	280	840	403	7900	607
600	284	850	407	8000	612
610	288	860	411	8100	617
620	292	870	415	8200	622
630	296	880	419	8300	627
640	300	890	423	8400	632
650	304	900	427	8500	637
660	308	910	431	8600	642
670	312	920	435	8700	647
680	316	930	439	8800	652
690	320	940	443	8900	657
700	324	950	447	9000	662
710	328	960	451	9100	667
720	332	970	455	9200	672
730	336	980	459	9300	677
740	340	990	463	9400	682
750	344	1000	467	9500	687
760	348	1010	471	9600	692
770	352	1020	475	9700	697
780	356	1030	479	9800	702
790	360	1040	483	9900	707
800	364	1050	487	10000	712

Source: Krejcie, R.V. and Morgan, D.W. (1970)

According to the Sample Size Determination Table from Meri et al. (2022) assessment, the sampling size is 384 people sufficient for the populations women employed under one million peoples. if a population of one million or more exists, the sample size must be 384, hence, this study's sample size is 384. Table 3.1 shows the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) model used in this research to determine sample size. It is a non-contrived study, one off data collection which used self-administered questionnaire to collect the primary source of data for this descriptive research study. This method offered cost-effectiveness, eliminated interviewer bias, allowed respondents sufficient time to provide well-considered answers, and enhanced the reliability of results due to the ability to use large sample sizes.

To guarantee reliability, a pilot study was conducted, involving approximately 10% of the target population, before the main study commenced. In addition, numerous researchers apply the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test when utilizing the SPSS tool, which assesses the suitability of variables, as noted by Shrestha (2021). Given that Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), Bartlett's test, and the Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) are employed to determine the acceptability of individual variables, Cronbach's Alpha, on the other hand, is used to validate the reliability of measurement instruments, as suggested by Arof, et al. (2018).

Table 2. Questionnaires table design

Section	Variables	Items	Details
A	Demographic Profile	6	To provide better understanding of respondents. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marital status 2. Position 3. Age 4. Operational year 5. Education level 6. Organization type

				Current work schedule (e.g., full-time, part-time, flexible hours).
B (Dependent variable)	Improve Women's work life balance	5		Rank the influence of flexible work hours, remote work, and job sharing on their overall work-life balance.
C (Independent Variables)	Flexible work hours	4		Awareness of Flexible Work Policies, Utilization of Flexible Hours
	Remote work	4		Frequency of Remote Work, Determine how often the respondent works remotely
	Job Sharing	4		Involvement in job sharing

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The relationship between Flexible Work Time and Work Life Balance

FWAs have a positive impact on work-life balance in Malaysia. Dousin et al., (2021) found that educated women with higher salaries prefer FWAs, which help them manage both personal and professional responsibilities. Further emphasizes that flexible work hours enhance work-life balance which can be leading to improved job satisfaction and productivity among women employees. Moreover, FWAs, including flexible work hours, have been found to improve workplace morale and women's employee satisfaction (Niebuhr et al., 2022).

As study from Wöhrmann et al. (2020), successful flexible work cultures are built on trust, transparency, and performance accountability. Leaders can encourage this culture by offering FWAs that create the teamwork and communication which giving employees a sense of control and valuing their perspectives. As indicated by Subramaniam et al. (2015), Part-time employment plays a significant role in helping women effectively manage both work and family responsibilities. With this, combined with family-friendly policies like FWAs, can allows women to make contributions both in their careers and at home, with benefits like improved childcare and more quality time with children.

3.2 The relationship between Remote Work and Work Life Balance

Remote work has grown in popularity in recent years, and it has been praised by both employees and employers for offering a better work-life balance. Remote work allows employees

to fulfil their responsibilities while away from the workplace and allowing them greater autonomy and choice over where they work and how they balance work and home life Wöhrmann et al. (2020). As a result, it contributes to better work-life balance and labour inclusion. However, some leaders claim that they will not offer remote work possibilities since it is negative for employee well-being (Dousin et al., 2021). In addition, remote work has been shown to increase comfort and improve work-life balance, with less stress (Courtney, E. 2020). Working remotely encourages professionals to do their business outside of the typical office setting. The basic concept is that no work needs to be completed in a certain location (Prasad et al., 2020). Coffee shops, beaches, and other countries are now options. If asynchronous work is appropriate, organizations can even extend operations beyond a typical 9 to 5 workday.

3.3 The relationship between Job Sharing and Work Life Balance

Job sharing is a flexible work arrangement that allows two or more employees to share the responsibilities of one full-time position (Wöhrmann et al., 2020). This arrangement can be beneficial for women employed in Malaysia who are seeking a better work-life balance. Job sharing can provide women employees with more flexibility in their work schedules, allowing them to better manage their personal and professional responsibilities. A study conducted in the Europe found that job sharing can have a positive impact on employee job satisfaction and productivity (Zuzana Opatrná & Jakub Procházka, 2023). The study found that employees who participated in job sharing reported higher levels of job satisfaction and were more productive than employees who did not participate in job sharing.

Job sharing can also provide employees with the opportunity to learn new skills and gain experience in different areas of the organization. This can be particularly beneficial for women who are seeking to advance their careers while also maintaining a healthy work-life balance. (Yadav & Dabhade, 2014). By participating in job sharing, women employees can gain valuable experience and skills that can help them advance their careers and achieve their professional goals.

4.0 Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the impact of FWAs, including flexible work hours, remote work, and job sharing on improving women's work-life balance in the Malaysian private sector. The research revealed a significant association between FWAs and the improvement of work-life balance for women in this sector. In addition, this study tested hypotheses related to the impact of these FWAs arrangements on women's work-life balance. Also, it's important to note that the observed outcomes could be influenced by the relatively small sample size and potential questionnaire imprecision.

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