

THE EFFECT OF FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS ON JOB SATISFACTION OF WORKING FEMALE

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ABSTRACT

With the full implementation of the three-child policy in China from 2021, the post-80s and post-90s generation will become the main force in the labor market, and the number of dual-income families, single-parent families and workers taking care of the elderly is increasing. With the increase in the number of female workers and the shift to dual-earner households, the possibility of both men and women taking on both family and work responsibilities is also increasing, which inevitably leads to work-family conflict. At the same time, flexible working arrangements have grown rapidly in popularity over the past decade and reached an unprecedented peak following the COVID-19 pandemic. As the impact of the pandemic wanes, flexible working arrangements continue to play an important role in enterprises. This makes it necessary for us to understand the impact of flexible working on employees' work-life balance. Theoretically speaking, this paper has further enriched the research of social exchange theory at the interface of work and family. From a practical point of view, this paper provides relevant support for enterprises to balance work-family conflicts for employees and promote the implementation of family-friendly practice policies in human resource management.

Keywords: Flexible Working Arrangements, Work-Life Balance, Job Satisfaction

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INTRODUCTION

Due to the slowdown of economic growth, increasing employment pressure and gender discrimination in employment, China's professional women have the problem of insufficient employment (Gao H., 2023). The increase in the number of children will only cause women to be more disadvantaged in the job market, which indicates that professional women in China are facing a more severe conflict between work and family (Zhao & Dong, 2023). From the women's perspective, family-friendly policies have had an important impact on reproductive decisions and well-being. The implementation of family-friendly policies can enhance women's risk management ability and reduce child-rearing costs, thus positively influencing reproductive decision-making and having great significance for improving fertility rate (Gan & Li, 2021). It can be seen that flexible working arrangement satisfies women's psychological and physiological needs of being respected, needed, understood and cared for. Therefore, the study of the impact of flexible working arrangement on working women's job satisfaction is of great practical significance, and the research results can provide reference value for the implementation of family-friendly policies.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory is considered one of the key conceptual frameworks for understanding workplace behavior, originally proposed by Blau (1964) et al. According to this theory, when one party is given preferential treatment, he feels obligated to reciprocate accordingly, for example, when a person feels that he is receiving valuable rewards from others, he is more motivated to stay engaged (Duan & Xu, 2022). Applying this theory to work-family relationships, if employees perceive that the organization makes an effort to help them balance their work-family roles (Feng & Liu, 2020), for example, by providing flexible working hours and locations, reciprocity norms will prompt them to reciprocate more positively to the organization (Aryee et al., 2005; Wayne et al., 2006; Chen Y. et al., 2021). The core principle of this theory is the reciprocal exchange of needs, that is, when one party benefits, there needs to be a corresponding return. Thus, when employees are given resources supported by the organization, they feel obligated to respond and give back to the organization in the same way (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In conclusion, social exchange theory provides a framework for understanding the interactions, motivations, and decision-making processes between employees and employers under flexible working arrangements. In practice, considering these theoretical principles can help to develop and implement more effective flexible working policies.

Definition and Observation Variables of Flexible Working Arrangements

1) Definition of flexible working arrangements

Flexible working arrangements were first proposed by a German economist in 1960 to alleviate the problem of traffic congestion when travelling to and from work, which means that employees can arrange their working hours flexibly according to their needs, thus replacing the original fixed working system (Schein et al., 1977). Until the end of the twentieth century, flexible working arrangements, characterised primarily by temporal flexibility, evolved into more refined forms. The most basic of these forms include core working hours, compressed workweeks and flexible credit systems, also known as optional working hours (Vega & Gilbert, 1997; Baltes et al., 1999; Sun et al., 2020). With the advancement of modern communication technologies, forms of work such as telecommuting and homeworking are becoming more common, and location flexibility also constitutes an important connotation of flexible working arrangements (Thompson et al., 2015; Putri et al., 2021; Aura & Desiana, 2023). Accordingly, this study considers the definition of flexible

working arrangements as arrangements for flexibility in working time and location agreed between employers and employees, which allow employees to choose when, where or how they work to a certain extent, in order to better accommodate their personal needs and life situations.

2) Observation variables of flexible working arrangements Through in-depth analysis of domestic and foreign literature, it is found that different scholars have different views on the division of the dimensions of work flexibility.

Xing & Li (2022) believe that flexible working arrangement can be divided into three dimensions, including not only time flexibility and workplace flexibility, but also sharing working atmosphere. Sun et al. (2020) divides the flexible working arrangements into four dimensions: time, space, flexibility of employment forms and flexibility of work content. Wu Fan et al. (2011) divided flexible work into five dimensions according to the study of flexible working arrangements in government departments, including working time, workplace, work content, work mode and flexibility of work post. In general, this study summarized the dimensions of flexible working arrangement by these scholars into the following five categories: time flexibility, location flexibility, employment flexibility, job content flexibility and sharing working atmosphere. Table 1 lists the observation variables of flexible working arrangements.

Table 1 Observation variables of flexible working arrangements

Flexible Working Arrangements	Time flexibility	Workplace flexibility	Sharing working atmosphere	Flexibility of forms of employment	Flexibility of work content
(Kossek et al., 2001)	√	√	√		
(Glass & Finley, 2002)	√		√		
(Liu X., 2009)	√	√			
(Matthews et al., 2010)	√	√	√		
(Wu Fan et al., 2011)	√	√		√	√
(Wei & Pan, 2012)		√			
(T. D. Allen et al., 2013)	√	√			
(Xie & Song, 2017)	√		√		
(Andrade et al., 2019)	√	√			
(Feeney & Stritch, 2019)			√		
(Sun et al., 2020)	√	√		√	√
(Garg & Agrawal, 2020)			√		
(Putri et al., 2021)		√			
(Xing & Li, 2022)	√	√	√		
(Nayak & Pandey, 2022)			√		
(Aura & Desiana, 2023)		√			
(Fan et al., 2023)			√		
Total	10	11	9	2	2

To sum up, the observation variables of flexible working arrangement are selected from three observation dimensions: time flexibility, workplace flexibility and sharing working atmosphere according to the most frequent occurrence of table 1.

Definition and Observation Variables of Job Satisfaction

1) Definition of job satisfaction

Hoppock (1935) first introduced the concept of "job satisfaction" to indicate the satisfaction of employees with their personal work environment, which is based on the employees' personal perception and assessment of their own working conditions and other elements from a psychological and physiological point of view. Vroom (1964) defined job satisfaction as the

emotional and psychological perceptions of employees. Vroom (1964) defines job satisfaction as the emotional and psychological perceptions that employees perceive, Locke (1976) considers job satisfaction as a feeling of pleasure or a positive emotional state that an individual derives from his or her work, Cheng et al. (2022) and Lin P. & Zhang (2023) consider job satisfaction as a psychological feeling that is closely related to the employee's experience of the work environment. This study mainly refers to the structural definition of job satisfaction, which is understood as the degree of individual satisfaction with the job as a whole, which reflects employees' feelings and evaluations of their work environment, job content, working conditions, organisational culture, and career development.

2) Observation variables of job satisfaction

The dimensions of job satisfaction have been the focus of many scholars in conducting satisfaction-related research. The different environments, purposes to be achieved, methods to be adopted, and theoretical bases of scholars have led to the fact that different scholars will propose different influencing factors that affect employees' job satisfaction (Li Q. & Mao, 2022). Stoilkovska et al. (2015) argued that job satisfaction consists of three dimensions: job content, wage and salary, and job promotion. Gamlath (2019) believes that job satisfaction can be divided into four dimensions, mainly including the nature of work, job treatment, job promotion and co-worker relationship, etc. Zhang S. & Liao (2007) believe that job satisfaction is divided into five dimensions, including the work itself, achievement and recognition, co-workers, promotion, and salary. In this paper, by reading the related literature on the observation variables of job satisfaction division at home and abroad, the research results of some scholars are summarised and sorted out as follows, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Observation variables of job satisfaction

Job Satisfaction	Remuneration and welfare	Work itself	Growth and promotion	Achievement and recognition	Interpersonal relationships	Corporate culture	Training and education	Management system	Working environment
(Zhang S. & Liao, 2007)	√	√	√	√	√				
(Yang J. & Lu, 2009)	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	
(Ozturk et al., 2014)				√					
(Stoilkovska et al., 2015)	√	√	√						
(Tang C. et al., 2018)		√	√			√			
(Gamlath, 2019)	√	√	√		√				
(Aziz-Ur-Rehman & Siddiqui, 2019)	√	√	√		√				
(Cong et al., 2020)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		
(Davidescu et al., 2020)	√			√	√				
(Putra et al., 2020)	√	√	√	√	√				
(Gorenak et al., 2020)			√	√					√
(Yuniarti, 2021)		√			√				
(Yanchovska & Vladimirov, 2023)	√	√	√	√	√				
(Adebayo & Ibrahim, 2023)	√			√	√				
(Ghimire et al., 2023)	√		√	√					
(Aura & Desiana, 2023)		√							
Total	11	11	11	10	10	2	2	1	1

In this study, based on previous literature, we divided the different determinants of job satisfaction into five dimensions: remuneration and welfare, work itself, growth and promotion, achievement and recognition, and Interpersonal relationships.

Flexible Working Arrangements and Job Satisfaction

According to Wheatley (2017), flexible working arrangements offer unique advantages to women. Compared to men, women are more likely to experience lower job satisfaction due to work-life conflict because they usually take on household chores such as caring for family members (e.g., the elderly and children) more frequently. Li et al. (2020) annual study demonstrated that flexible working arrangements can increase employee engagement, organisational commitment, and satisfaction outcomes. Qin et al. (2022) studied that a positive relationship between flexible working arrangements and employee engagement in a supportive corporate culture. Yan B. et al. (2020) also stated that implementing flexible working arrangements allows employees to better balance work and family commitments, which helps to develop positive work attitudes and increase employee job satisfaction. Therefore, flexible working arrangements have a significant positive impact on job satisfaction (Putri et al., 2021; Alotaibi, 2023).

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Flexible scheduling enhances people's sense of control over their work and family affairs, which in turn eases the conflict between work and family (Beham et al., 2020). Flexible working hours and locations meet the needs of family members, help employees to engage in family activities and better cope with emergencies, which improves the quality of family life, and the resolution of family affairs enables employees to devote themselves to work in order to realise the benefits of family to work (Kim et al., 2021). Harmonious family relationships enable individuals to better cope with work responsibilities and increase productivity and concentration. By providing flexible working arrangements, organisations can convey to employees the concern and support for their life balance, enhance job satisfaction and loyalty, and when employees feel respected and valued, they are more willing to make greater contributions to the company, which in turn improves job performance (Li et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

China's comprehensive opening of the three-child policy, which has brought a lot of pressure on women, but also brought a lot of costs to the family, so many have fertility conditions are not willing to give birth, in the final analysis comes from the pressure of work and family interface. This study provides a way to promote better work for organizational employees, leading the industry to focus on the impact of flexible working arrangements on employees' working lives. At the same time, this study provides practical enlightenment for enterprises to achieve work-family balance, calling on enterprises to strengthen the implementation of family-friendly policies such as flexible working hours and places, and create a "family-friendly" working environment, so as to help working women better balance work and family responsibilities, make them feel the organization's humanized care for employees, and enhance their sense of belonging to and dependence on the organization. Ultimately, job satisfaction.

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