

Flexible Work Practices and Work–Life Balance: An Empirical Study on Employee Performance in the ITES Sector

Mrs. Maya Sarangapani¹

Associate Professor Government First Grade College for Women
Doddaballapura, Research Scholar, Department of Commerce
Al-Ameen Research Foundation,
University of Mysore

Mr. Dr. T K Srinath²

Professor/Research Supervisor
Department of Commerce
Al Ameen Research Foundation, Bangalore
University of Mysore, Mysuru

Abstract

In this study Research Methodology is descriptive and analytical research and the types of data used in Research are Primary data and Secondary data. The data collection for primary data was done using a structured questionnaire from 220 employees working in the select ITES organizations. Flexible Work arrangements explored included remote work, Flexible Work system, Flexible Work schedule, telecommuting and compressed work weeks.

The findings of the study suggested that Flexible Work practices have indeed a positive significant effect on Employee Performance and work–life balance. The correlation analysis shows that there is a high positive correlation between Flexible Work Practices and work–life balance. This is corroborated by the results of the regression analysis which indicates that Flexible Work practices, along with work–life balance, significantly affect employee productivity, job satisfaction and organizational effectiveness. The study also found out that hybrid work systems/remote working is the most preferred Flexible Work arrangement among the respondents of the ITES sector. Under flexible staffing, employees feel happier working, stress levels are lower, they are more engaged, and have increased work productivity.

The study's conclusion is that Flexible Work Practices is important for increasing employees' well-being, work–life balance and Organization's performance in the Digital Workplace. Flexible Working arrangements can be used to enhance an ITES organization's productivity, retention, motivation and

sustainability. Overall, the study provides valuable insights for organizations looking to implement Flexible Work policies and practices that promote employee well-being and enhance their performance in today's digital work environment.

Keywords

Flexible Work Practices, Work–Life Balance, Employee Performance, Remote Working, Hybrid Work System, ITES Sector.

1. Introduction

The changing work scenario and Flexible Work practices has changed the modern organisational setting in a great manner especially in knowledge-based industries such as the Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES). With the speed of technological change, globalisation, digitalisation and changing employee expectations, organisations have been increasingly looking at Flexible Work options such as remote working, hybrid working models, flexible scheduling, compressed working weeks, and telecommuting. These practices are now regarded as vital approaches for boosting employee satisfaction, organizational commitment, productivity and organizational performance **(Allen, Golden, & Shockley, 2015)**.

The heavy workload, long working hours, stringent deadlines and constant virtual connectivity are making it one of the most challenging issues for the employees in the ITES industry when it comes to work–life balance. Workers also frequently find it difficult to balance work and life and family, leading to stress, burnout, decreased job satisfaction and job efficiency. Organizations are now realizing that they need to have Flexible Work policies that help their employees to balance their work life and their personal lives **(Greenhaus & Allen, 2011)**.

The characteristics of the sector (dynamic work, project-based work and digital dependency) make the ITES sector suitable for Flexible Work practices. Even the nature of the business in the post-pandemic world has encouraged the use of remote/hybrid practices in ITES organizations around the world. Flexible Work practices not only provide autonomy and convenience for employees, but can also help to increase employee satisfaction, reduce absenteeism and improve the performance of the organisation. A healthy work–life balance can have a healthy effect on the engagement, motivation, creativity and productivity of your employees at their work place **(Kossek & Thompson, 2016)**.

Human resources are the essence in the Service sector, it is believed that Employee Performance is an important factor for success of an organization. Implementing Flexible Work practices can have a positive impact on Employee Performance as it can help to alleviate the stress associated with work and enhance their psychological wellbeing. Fewer workers are satisfied and committed with their work when their work times and/or places are rigidly structured, which can also result in poorer task performance and efficiency **(Bloom et al., 2015)**.

Although more and more Flexible Work systems have been introduced in the ITES industry, the connection between Flexible Work systems, work–life balance and Employee Performance is still an important subject for empirical research. Studies focussing on individual aspects of flex working and/or job satisfaction exist but there is little work that considers the overall impact of Flexible Work practices and work-life balance on Employee Performance in the context of ITES. Hence, this study aims to examine the effect of Flexible Work practices on Employee Performance with a special focus on the mediating effect of work–life balance in ITES sector.

The results from this research are likely to be useful in Organizational policy making for ITES companies to implement Flexible Work strategies that maximizes employee well-being and organizational productivity. The study also provides both academic essentials on the latest practices in Workplace and its impact on sustainable Employee Performance in the Digital workplace of today.

2. Review of Literature

Flexible Work practices have emerged from the development of new technology, the changing attitudes of employees, the globalisation of today's working environment and the demands for more work–life balance. Recently, platforms like remote work, hybrid working, teleworking, Flexible Work times and shorter work weeks have been implemented for the benefit of staffs and for better productivity of the organizations, particularly in Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) sector. Several researchers have investigated the relationship among Flexible Work, work–life balance and workforce productivity for different organizational contexts.

Initial studies on Flexible Work (FW) have mainly focused on the impact of work flexibility on work performance and on the work–family balance. Virtual Office Systems and Flexible Work arrangements were seen to boost productivity as well as ensure employees received greater options in relation to their work and personal commitments which led to increased work – life balance (**Hill et al., 2001**). Likewise, **Glass and Finley (2002)** discovered that family responsive policies have a positive effect on employee stress levels and can lead to higher organizational commitment and job satisfaction levels.

Research into telecommuting/flexibility became more intense as more and more people came to engage in more Flexible Work. Employees who have Flexible Work options report significantly less work–family conflict and higher job satisfaction and employee morale than do those who do not have flexible options (**Kossek and Ozeki, 2003**). Another advantage of telecommuting is that employees have more autonomy and self-governance over their work, and it provides some balance in their lives, as cited by **Ammons and Markham (2004)**. Supportive and Flexible Work environments bring positive attributes into the workplace as identified by **Byron (2005)** such as Increased Employee Performance, decreased turnover intentions and reduced workplace stress. Telecommuting, remote working and employee well-being were more the focus of the research. **Golden and Veiga (2005)** found that moderate amounts of teleworking have a positive impact on employee productivity, job satisfaction and emotional health. Also **Gajendran and Harrison (2007)**, revealed that telecommuting improves work–life balance, decreases stress, and enhances Employee Performance and organizational commitment.

Others centered on support for flexible work among the employers and employees' attitudes towards flexible working. **Allen et al (2008)** found that increased flex is related to increased engagement and decreased burnout. **Thompson and Prottas (2009)** suggested that family supportive organizational culture and flexible policies are positive factors relating to employee's satisfaction and work–family conflict. In addition,

McNall et al. (2010) determined that employees in flexible systems are more motivated, have higher morale and improved job performance.

The concept of work–life balance is also a much discussed area of the literature, and of flexibility in the workplace. Implementing work–life balance initiatives promotes employee health, productivity and enterprise sustainability (**Greenhaus & Allen, 2011**). The study conducted by **Michel et al. (2011)** revealed that Flexible Work systems help the employees to successfully combine working and family roles and to cope with psychological stress. In his new book, **Blood et al. (2012)** report on studies indicating that home based workers are more productive than in-office workers and have fewer absences and are happier on the job.

Recently there has been an interest in investigating the relationship between Flexible Work practices and Employee Performance. **Shockley and Allen (2012)** found that workers who feel more supported by the organization with flexibility have improved work–life balance and better work performance. As well as that **De Menezes and Kelliher (2013)** proposed Flexible Work practices as key aspects that can contribute to employee motivation, satisfaction and organisational efficiency.

This has stimulated research into strategic implications of Flexible Work systems with the advent of digital technologies and changing work structures. While the flexibility of the workplace can positively affect productivity and autonomy, excessive access to technology can cause more pressure on workloads (**Putnam, Myers, and Gailliard, 2014**). **Kossek, Lewis and Hammer (2014)** emphasized that flexibility should be considered as a topic of contention in retaining, engaging and improving employees' performance as it is one of the strategic organizational practices.

Consulting to study how well telecommuting works, **Allen, Golden and Shockley (2015)** have concluded that Flexible Work arrangements have a positive impact on employee satisfaction, commitment and organisational performance. **Anderson et al. (2015)** also reported that teleworkers are less stressed and have improved mental health. **Kossek and Thompson (2016)** also added that businesses that have embraced Flexible Work practices have reported increased productivity among employees and a more effective business.

For the past few years, it's been the Digital Workplace and the mixed Workplace. Work practices associated with remote working were found to positively impact job satisfaction and productivity as well as create work pressures where working constantly online (**Felstead, Henseke, 2017**). Similarly, Flexible Work hours were seen to positively affect employee morale and productivity (**Agha et al., 2017**). Flexible Work arrangements are observed to be beneficial for productivity but effective boundary management is required to maintain work–life balance **Kelliher and Anderson (2018)**. **Chung and van der Lippe (2018)** also highlighted that Flexible Work practices could be seen as a way of minimizing work–family conflict and enhancing well-being amongst employees.

They also found the areas of staff wellbeing, remote working and Flexible Work arrangements have been a key focus of research in the past few years. **Wheatley (2019)** indicated that employees working under Flexible Work systems are more satisfied of their work and are committed to the organization. **Carillo et al. (2020)** found that flexible work arrangements are a must-have these days, especially in the wake of COVID-19, in order to maintain employees productive and the organization alive. In addition, more flexibility in work activities has also been reported to affect work–life balance and productivity positively when appropriate policies and digital facilities are available at the organisation (**Wang et al., 2021**).

Further research has underlined the relevance of Flexible Work systems in improving the productivity of the employees and the sustainability of the organizations. **Sang and Chepkwony (2022)** cited by Bett asserts that Teleworking and workplace flexibilities has a favourable influence on work productivity and work-life balance. **Arora & Pratibha (2022)** revealed that Flexible Work arrangements were influencing the well-being, Job Satisfaction and performance of employees in the IT industry positively. According to **Medina-Garrido, Biedma-Ferrer and Ramos-Rodriguez (2023)** Flexible Work policies can indirectly affect Employee Performance related to their psychological wellbeing and reducing work stress.

Also, in the past few months, there has been growing literature highlighting the importance of the hybrid work culture and digital workplace in the IT and ITES sectors. Research done in 2023 showed that hybrid working practices boost engagement, productivity in the workplace and Work–Life integration. Research also performed in 2024 found that the workers under Hybrid and Flexible Work systems suffer from less burnout, have more productivity and are more satisfied with their job situation than their counterparts in the traditional work systems.

Extensive literature is available providing evidence of the beneficial effects of Flexible Work practice on aspects of Work–Life balance, Employee Well-being, Organisation Commitment, and Employee Performance. Although there are many studies that examine the impact of Flexible Work Practices and Work–Life Balance on employee performance, there are few that analyze the combined effects of both Flexible Work Practices and work–life balance on performance – in this industry – ITES. Thus, the scope of the present study is determined to get the understanding of the effect of Flexible Work Practices and Work–Life Balance on the employee's Performance in the field of ITES industry and to make up the study gap.

3. Research Gap

Based on the survey of the literature, there are different pieces of literature on the different topics of Flexible Work Practices, telecommuting, remote working and work–life balance individually. A series of studies on organizational environment's impact on the employee satisfaction, the organisation commitment, the mental health and the overall productivity of employees. Current research also highlighted the fact that Flexible Work policies are vital to the promotion of Employee Wellbeing, Employee Stress management and Organisation Efficiency.

While there are many studies that have investigated effects of Flexible Work systems on employee outcomes, very little research has investigated the combined effects of Flexible Work systems, work–life balance and Employee Performance in the Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) sector. Past studies focused on one aspect of either telecommuting or work–life balance without investigating the two aspects together in regard to their impact on the Job Performance.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a rapid change in the workplace system and remote working and working from home practices are widely adopted in IT and ITES companies. But empirical research investigating the effectiveness of these new Flexible Work systems in the post-pandemic world is still scarce. Moreover, there are hardly any research studies that examine the mediation of Work–life balance between Flexible Work Practices and Employee Performance in the context of Digitally connected Workplace.

In view of this the present study tries to address this research gap and looks into the effect of Flexible Work Practice and Work–Life balance on the Performance of employees in the ITES sector.

4. Objectives of the Study

1. To study the effect of Flexible Work practices on Employee Performance in ITES sector.
2. To analyze the relation between Flexible Work practices – Work–Life Balance in the Context of Employees.
3. To gain insight into the effect of Work – Life Balance on the performances of employees.
4. To determine the main Flexible Work practices used in the ITES sector.
5. To recommend appropriate actions to be taken to enhance Employee Performance using Effective Flexible Work Practices and Work–Life Balance strategies.

5. Hypotheses of the Study

H01: There is no significant effect in the Flexible Work practices on the Employee Performance in the ITES sector.

H02: There is no relationship between Flexible Work practices and Work–Life balance.

H03: There is no significant relationship between Work–life balance and Employee Performance among the ITES sector.

6. Research Methodology

Both descriptive and analytical method is used in the present study. Both primary and secondary data was used. To obtain primary data, a structured questionnaire was designed with 5 point Likert scale from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” from 220 employees from selected ITES organizations in India. Questions in the questionnaire were given to the important constructs like Flexible Work practices, Work

Life Balance and Employee Performance. Secondary data had been collected from various published research papers, book, organization report and government publications related to the Flexible Work practices and Human Resource Management.

The respondents were picked from ITES organization from the major cities in India through purposive sampling techniques. Yamane's formula for finite population was used to determine the sample size and the 220 was deemed sufficient for this study. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was measured to test the reliability of the research instrument and got a value of 0.87 which means that the internal consistency of the scale items is high. The instrument was reviewed by academic experts and HR practitioners before the data was collected to achieve content validity as well as pilot testing was done with 30 respondents for input and refinement of the questionnaire prior to the main survey.

By using SPSS software, the data were analysed. The analysis done on the data comprises of Percentage Analysis, mean and Standard deviation, Pearson's correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis. The direction and strength of the relationship between Flexible Work practices and Work–Life Balance was examined through the use of correlation analysis. The factors Flexible Work Practices and Work–Life Balance were identified as predictors of Employee Performance using the analysis of regression.

7. Data Analysis and Interpretation

220 employees from various ITES organizations responded to the present study. Data obtained were analysed using percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation, correlation analyse and regression analysis.

Table1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variables	Classification	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	128	58
	Female	92	42
Age	Below 25 Years	38	17
	25–35 Years	101	46
	36–45 Years	56	25
	Above 45 Years	25	12
Educational Qualification	Undergraduate	54	25
	Postgraduate	132	60
	Professional Qualification	24	11
	Others	10	4
Work Experience	Below 5 Years	70	32
	5–10 Years	84	38
	10–15 Years	42	19
	Above 15 Years	24	11

Preferred Flexible Work Practice	Hybrid Work Model	96	44
	Remote Working	68	31
	Flexible Scheduling	34	15
	Telecommuting	14	6
	Compressed Workweek	8	4

Demographic analysis of respondents shows that the majority of respondents in the ITES were male employees (58 percent) and the female employees (42 percent). The major age group of the respondents was 25-35 years (46%) and it was observed that the young professional group particularly contributes to the workforce in the ITES sector.

Education qualification analysis shows that 60 percent of the respondents had postgraduate qualification which means that in the college is a well-educated labor force. From the work experience analysis, it can be found that 38 % of the respondents possessed 5–10 years of experience and 32 % of respondents possessed less than 5 years of experience.

The results are also showing that out of the three Flexible Work practices, the hybrid was the top choice among employees (44 percent), followed by remote working (31 percent). Vitamin enhancing both Productivity and Work–Life Balance are shown to be favoured by employees.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between Flexible Work practices and work–life balance.

Table 2: Correlation between Flexible Work Practices and Work–Life Balance

Variables	Correlation Value (r)	Significance
Flexible Work Practices and Work–Life Balance	0.742	0.000

Interpretation

The result of the correlation was strong and positive with value being 0.7425 for Flexible Work Practices and Work – Life Balance. The p-value is less than 0.05, so we reject the null hypothesis. For this reason, the implementation of Flexible Work Practices plays a great role on Work–Life Balance of the workers working in ITES sector.

Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was used to examine the impact of work–life balance and Flexible Work Practices on Employee Performance.

Table 3: Impact of Work–Life Balance on Employee Performance

Variables	Beta Value	t-value	Significance
Work–Life Balance	0.684	11.426	0.000

Interpretation

Based on the regression result, Work–Life Balance is significant positive effect on Employee Performance. The beta value of 0.684 indicates that Work–Life Balance will positively impact on the effectiveness of employees on improving their productivity. The null hypothesis is rejected, b/c the significance value < 0.05 .

Table 4: Impact of Flexible Work Practices on Employee Performance

Variables	Beta Value	t-value	Significance
Flexible Work Practices	0.711	12.873	0.000

Interpretation

The findings reveal that Flexible Work Practices significantly influence Employee Performance in the ITES sector. The beta value of 0.711 indicates that Flexible Work Arrangements positively contribute to Employee Productivity, Engagement, and Job Effectiveness.

Discussion

The findings found in this study align with the overall literature on Flexible Work Practices (FWPs) and that of Work–Life Balance and Employee Performance. The results obtained from Flexible Work Practices and its correlation with Work – Life Balance proved to be strong ($r = 0.742$) which strengthened the findings of **Gajendran and Harrison (2007)** that telecommuting can help to reduce work – family conflict and boost Employee well-being. Likewise, **Allen et al. (2015)** documented that a strong correlation between effective telecommuting arrangements and increased organizational performance and employee satisfaction is found, which is in line with the present study's correlation results.

The obtained beta value in regression analysis for this construct was 0.684, this value shows that the construct Work life balance has direct relationship with the Construct Employee performance and is significant ($p < 0.001$). This validates the findings of **Greenhaus and Allen (2011)** who said that work–life balance policies lead to higher Employee well-being and productivity as well as the conclusions obtained in

the study work from home by **Bloom et al. (2012)** where it is reported that home-based workers realized tangible increases in their productivity as a result of working at home. The findings are also consistent with those of **Medina-Garrido, Biedma-Ferrer, and Ramos-Rodriguez (2023)**, who found that flexible policies have an indirect impact on Employee Performance through Psychological health.

From the regression result, flex work style is one of the most significant direct effect to Employee performance in ITES sector with the result of $\beta = 0.711$ ($p < 0.001$). This is in contrast to **Kossek and Thompson (2016)** who said that organizations that have embraced Flexible Work practices reap benefits in employee productivity and operational performance from time to time. It is confirmed that the most preferred model was the hybrid working (44%) followed by remote working (31%) which aligns with the post-pandemic trends as found by **Wang et al. (2021)** and **Carillo et al. (2020)** in the context of ITES.

This study makes an unique contribution to the already existing studies by taking the Flexible Work Practices in general rather than considering one Flexible Work Practice (telecommuting) exclusively within an industry like ITES in India. The mediating effect of work–life balance between support for Flexible Work practices and Employee Performance is well supported by the empirical results, and has been demonstrated in an under-researched national and sectoral context. This is particularly true in the case of ITES businesses which are typically characterized by shift scheduling, a global customer base and round-the-clock connectivity on digital platforms which is a far more critical Work–Life Balance situation than for traditional businesses.

8. Major Findings

- 1) The most preferred Flexible Work practices in the ITES sector are hybrid work systems and Remote work systems.
- 2) Flexible Work Arrangements have a significant positive impact on Employee Work–Life Balance.
- 3) The positive impact of a good Work–Life Balance on Employee Productivity and Job Performance.
- 4) Flexible employees are more Satisfied at Work and experience less Stress at Work.
- 5) Flexible Work Arrangements have significant impacts on staff engagement, motivation and commitment with the organisation.
- 6) Flexible Work Practices is having a positive effect on Organisation Productivity and Working Efficiency.

9. Suggestions

- 1) Employment Satisfaction and productivity is essential to have a Hybrid Working policy formulated and practised by 1) ITES organisations.
- 2) Relevant Technological facilities and Communication assistance need to be provided for remote workers under the Self-employed Profilers scheme of ITES.

- 3) Provision should be made for employee wellness and mental health programs to be implemented to help mitigate work related stress and burn-out as per ITES.
- 4) Systems to measure Performance should be in place with a system of Flexible Work arrangements.
- 5) To encourage Work–Life Balance programs – counselling support, flexible leave, wellness programs etc. amongst the organisations.
- 6) Training programs need to be carried out to enhance Employees' Adaptability and to hone skills in digital hybrid workplaces.

10. Conclusion

In practice, today one of the main organization approaches in Digital Workplace is Flexible Work practices especially in the sector of the ITES industry. The study posits that Flexible Work Practices (which include Flexible Work Schedules, hybrid working and working from home) positively extend employee work – life balance, job satisfaction and job performance. Flexible systems allow staff to be more flexible, have less stress and become more effective in their work.

From the result it suggests that there are strong relationships between the Work–Life Balance and the Employee Effectiveness and Organizational Performance. The study also indicates efficient Flexible Work policy brings Employee Engagement, Motivation & Efficiency to the companies.

Therefore, it is crucial for ITES organisations to continue utilising the flexibility of their working systems and employee support provision to promote Employee Performance and Organisational Development in the new Digital Era.

11. Outcome of this study.

1. The sample was selected from ITES organizations in selected urban cities, hence the results might not be generalizable to all ITES workers in smaller cities and rural areas.
2. The cross sectional studies can only measure the relationship between Flexible Work arrangements and Employee Performance at a given time frame and not trends in flexible working practices or employee outcomes over time.
3. The scales used for self-report might be subject to social desirability response bias.
4. A formal mediation analysis was not conducted (Baron and Kenny, 1986; bootstrapping using PROCESS macro, Hayes and Preacher, 2009), which limits the conclusions that can be drawn for mediation; although conceptually thereof, mediation was theorized.
5. Also, the results within this study were not able to account for organizational level factors that may affect the effectiveness of Flexible Work Practices, such as Management style, Team size and Industry sub-segment.

11. Opportunities for future research.

The constraints of this study can be addressed in future research in a number of ways. More substantiated evidence of the causal effects of Flexible Work Practices on Performance Outcomes would be obtained if the same workers were followed over multiple time periods. Comparative studies for various industry sectors such as IT, BFSI, Healthcare etc. would help to understand whether the results are applicable to a particular sector or widely applicable. Gender-disaggregated analysis of take-up of Work–Life Balance and Flexible Work would greatly be beneficial to understand the differential impacts. Future studies may also examine the moderation of other factors such as work-life balance formal mediation and digital infrastructure quality along with moderation analysis of the mediator's effect more in-depth. Additionally, qualitative research could be conducted using focus groups and in-depth interviews to follow-up quantitative data and also to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of the employees with Flexible Work systems.

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