Relationship Between Flexible Work Arrangements, Well-Being, and Performance of Employees During the COVID -19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The primary purpose of the present research paper was to investigate the influence of flexible work arrangements on personal and family well-being and performance of employees. The study also examined the moderating role of managerial support on the relationship between flexible work arrangements and well-being & performance. The target respondents were the teleworkers employed with Indian IT organizations located in North India. Data were gathered from 412 teleworkers to study the hypotheses, and Smart PLS 2.0 was employed to analyze the data. The results revealed a significant relationship between flexible work arrangements, personal and family well-being, and employee performance. The study further confirmed the significant and moderating effect of managerial support on the relationship between flexible work arrangements and performance. During the work-from-home policies at the workplace, the employees perceived that receiving support from the managers helped them perform well. As the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the economies globally, the present study's findings would be essential for the managers to support their employees during such crises.

Keywords: Flexible work arrangements, well-being, employee performance, teleworkers, IT sector

JEL Classification Codes: 131, M1, M15

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he outburst of the COVID pandemic and pervasive lockdowns have wreaked havoc in the workplace. This outbreak has negatively impacted several economies of the world, and to minimize the virus transmission, most of the countries imposed lockdowns and work-from-home practices as a part of social distancing measures. In recent times, this has been one of the most distressing crises affecting the world's economies (Margherita et al., 2021). To combat COVID-19, the enforced lockdown measures, including the WFH protocol, have become the new normal for the survival of business entities. As a result, request for flexible work arrangements (FWAs) has become popular as the intention of assisting employees in performing their personal and professional work lives effectively has become a global trend. Hill et al. (2008) explained FWAs as a social and contextual attribute of workplaces constructed from both structural (the availability of policies and the basic nature of tasks performed, such as manufacturing vs. service) and interactional factors (supportive culture and leader-subordinate trust). Organizations with FWAs offer employees the option to work outside of standard hours and places. Cooper and Baird (2015) explained FWAs as the practices that are often regarded as an indication of management support for employees' efforts to balance professional and personal obligations. In the present

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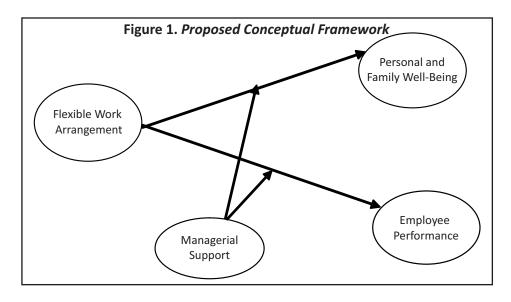
scenario, remote-working and teleworking have become the new normal irrespective of the organization type. Teleworking allows employees to work from anywhere using technology, which has attracted academicians and practitioners.

Past research studies have introduced the advantageous side of teleworking, which includes less stress, increased productivity and satisfaction, autonomy, reduction in travel expenses, and more family time (Fonner & Roloff, 2010; Harpaz, 2002; Johnson et al., 2007; Morgan, 2004). Baruch (2001) highlighted the advancement in the technology sector that has helped employees fulfill their commitments when following remote working during unconventional settings. The advent of the COVID -19 pandemic has enforced the employees to become remote workers (Kniffin et al., 2021). Stavrou (2005) stated that limited studies have explored the positive side of teleworking of FWAs; such practices help the employees balance the work-life and help retain and attract talent and reduce costs related to employee turnover. Bedi and Khurana (2020) highlighted that appropriate practices help in enhancing employee attitude, commitment, and effectiveness of the organization.

Employees have shifted to full-time teleworking due to the unpredictable situation of the pandemic, therefore, analyzing the impact of teleworking on employees' performance will provide important insights to the organizations about the productivity of employees during the pandemic. Despite the various studies on FWAs, this research is primarily based on the employees following WFH in private organizations. This study contributes in several ways as teleworking, telecommuting, or WFH have been widely practiced since the COVID - 19 outbreak. First, by investigating the perceived relationship between FWAs and performance outcomes during the COVID pandemic. Second, the study focuses on the impact of FWAs on personal and family well-being. Third, the study focuses on the impact of managerial support as a moderating variable on the relationship between FWAs and employee performance and FWAs and well-being. Arora and Srinivasan (2020) stated that the COVID -19 pandemic has affected all sectors, especially the service sector. The present research attempts to answer the aforementioned research problems.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this research work grounds on the social exchange theory (SET). SET suggests a norm of reciprocity, which is an exchange relationship between the organizations and their employees (Blau, 1964). When organizations favor employees by providing training, security, and advancement



opportunities, employees reciprocate them by offering a positive attitude, loyalty, and engagement (Takeuchi et al., 2007). As per the theoretical concept, employees stay committed to the organization with an assumption that their organizations will appreciate the contribution of their employees (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In exchange relationships, the organizations are primarily concerned with their employees' devotion, involvement, and loyalty; whereas employees are more worried about whether or not their organizations are following their promises to care for their well-being (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Employees maintain social exchanges with their organization related to trust, investments, and obligations; the exchanges can be economical or socioemotional aspects (Shore et al., 2006). The outcomes of both types of economic exchange (pay and benefits) and socio-emotional (trust and obligation) could be different (Shore et al., 2006). Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework proposed to investigate the hypothesized relationships.

Review of Literature

FWAs and Personal and Family Well-Being

According to Johnson et al. (2007), teleworking enables the employees to work from home, and employees can also deal with their family matters, and they can have a balance between their personal and professional lives. Higher flexibility can help employees perform their personal and occupational commitment more effectively (Raghuram & Wiesenfeld, 2004). As per the findings of Nakrošienė et al. (2019), teleworking allows the employees to fulfill their work commitments even in sickness, which increases the satisfaction with teleworking. Baert et al. (2020) found that WFH arrangements positively and negatively affected employee outcomes. The researchers revealed that employees following WFH protocol were concerned about deteriorating colleague relationships, declining development opportunities, and less career growth.

On the contrary, the researchers interpreted that WFH resulted in increased efficiency and less burnout. Another study by Wong et al. (2021) conducted in Hong Kong showed that well-being had the strongest impact on work-from-home effectiveness. The study found that WFH allows the employees to perform their roles at work and in the family effectively. Based on the existing empirical relationships, the study posits the hypothesis as:

\$\Box\$ **H1:** There is a significant impact of FWAs on personal and family well-being.

FWAs and Employee Performance

FWAs are described as the ability of employees to make decisions about when, where, and for how much duration they will engage in organizational tasks (Hill et al., 2008). Jamal et al. (2021) conducted a study among 377 IT workers employed in the National Capital Region (NCR). The researchers found that technical support, schedule flexibility, and autonomy significantly impacted performance and productivity. Chakraborty and Altekar (2021) stated that various organizations had announced remote working permanently as the quality of work can be enhanced by working remotely. Tavares (2017) revealed that employees are amenable to teleworking as they feel socially active; it helps improve performance and relieve other job constraints. FWAs are offered to employees by their organizations to balance their professional and family lives that will help in improving the organizational performance (Richardson & McKenna, 2014). Bloom et al. (2015) observed that employees who were offered WFH increased their performance by 13% among Chinese employees. The authors also reported that employees assigned WFH were satisfied, which led to a reduction in employee attrition.

Beauregard et al. (2019) reported that jobs requiring more concentration could be performed better when employees are working from home. Teleworkers can work for long hours, but their engagement in organizational policies declines while working from home. On the contrary, FWAs allow the employees to work flexibly, become

more productive, and also manage their personal lives, Research conducted by Rahman et al. (2020) interpreted that there was no direct relationship between FWAs and employees' performance. The study further revealed that innovative behavior mediates the relationship between FWAs and employees' performance. Based on the above arguments, the hypothesis is posited as follows:

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The Moderating Role of Managerial Support

Managerial support can be described as the supervisor's willingness to accommodate employees' schedules and tasks as well as providing guidance that can assist employees in managing their job and improving it. Baruch (2001) identified negative consequences of teleworking, such as isolation, job insecurity, and fewer career opportunities. Allen et al. (2015) highlighted the strategies for the effective and successful implementation of teleworking, and management support is one of those strategies (Taskin & Edwards, 2007). Shockley et al. (2013) highlighted that receiving support from the organizations and the managers had a significant role in accepting and administering telework practices. Proper management of employees following WFH needs to be provided with technical assistance to perform their work effectively. The key challenge faced by employees performing telework is being isolated due to less interaction among the peer groups, which can also lead to fewer career development opportunities (Taylor & Kavanaugh, 2005). Ko et al. (2013) revealed that supervisor support moderated the relationship between family-friendly work practices and job satisfaction. The researchers also found that supervisor support was more than top management support on firm performance. Based on the above arguments, it is assumed that managerial support plays an important role during WFH protocol and FWAs, therefore, the study posits the hypotheses as follows:

🔖 **H3**: Managerial support moderates the relationship between FWAs and employee performance.

🕏 **H4:** Managerial support moderates the relationship between FWAs and personal and family well-being.

Research Methodology

To empirically investigate the impact of FWAs on personal and family well-being and employee performance, 412 teleworkers were surveyed from different IT organizations located in the Northern region of India. The study adopted a descriptive research design, and the type of research is analytical research. Due to the unavailability of the data, the sample was selected using purposive sampling. Employees working from home were requested to participate in the survey. The details of the organizations were collected from the NASSCOM website, and the scope of the study was limited to NASSCOM-listed IT organizations only. The present study employed a structured questionnaire to gather data from the respondents. The time period of the study was from January – July 2021. The questionnaire consisted of two parts, including the dependent and independent variables and the moderating variable. The number of respondents was selected on the basis of Cochran's formula of sample size determination using $n = Z^2 pq/e^2$ (Cochran, 1963). Smart PLS 2.0 was employed to analyze the data.

Measures

The survey instrument consists of 27 items of FWAs, personal and family well-being, and performance. The six items used to measure personal and family well-being were adapted from Wong et al. (2020). The sample item is, "I am able to maintain a better relationship with my family members." To measure the FWAs, 12 items were adapted from the flexible work options questionnaire (FWOO)-Version 2 (Albion, 2004). The sample item is, "Flexible working arrangements are essential for me in order to be able to deal with other interests and responsibilities outside work." Managerial support was assessed using the items adapted from the scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986). The sample item is, "My manager strongly considers my goals and values." The word "organization" was replaced by "manager" to make the scale more appropriate for the study. Employee performance was measured by items adapted from Koopmans et al. (2013). The sample item is, "I am able to fulfill my responsibilities during the lockdown." The respondents were asked to state their agreement or disagreement on a 5-point Likert scale (5-strongly agree to 1-strongly disagree).

Data Analysis and Results

The descriptive statistics are reported in Table 1. The final data for analysis consisted of 412 responses which are more than the recommended value according to Cochran's formula. Respondents with a minimum of one year of experience with their present organization were requested to participate in the survey.

It can be inferred from Table 1 that 238 (57.8%) respondents were male, and 174 (42.2%) were female; 223 respondents (54.1 %) were married, and 189 (45.9 %) were unmarried. Regarding educational qualifications, most employees were post graduates, that is, 240 (58.3 %) and 127 (30.8%) employees had completed their graduation. Only 45 employees (10.9%) had degrees other than graduation and post-graduation. The majority of the respondents were under the age group of less than 30 years; 90 respondents (21.8%) came under the age group of 31–35 years, 47 respondents (11.4%) were under the age group of 36 – 40 years, and only 42 (10.2%) respondents were above the age of 40 years. The majority of the respondents (192, 46.6%) had a work experience of 3 – 6 years, followed by the respondents (123, 29.9%) with less than 3 years of experience with their present organization. Only 45 respondents (10.9%) had 7–10 years of work experience, and only 52 respondents (12.6%) had more than 10 years of experience. The demographics indicate that the sample consists of primarily young employees.

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Qualification	Frequency	Percent
Male	238	57.8	Graduation	127	30.8
Female	174	42.2	Post-Graduation	240	58.3
Total	412	100	Others	45	10.9
			Total	412	100
Marital Status	Frequency	Percent	Age	Frequency	Percent
Married	223	54.1	Less than 25 years	107	26.0
Unmarried	189	45.9	25 – 30 years	126	30.6
Total	412	100	31 – 35 years	90	21.8
			36 – 40 years	47	11.4
Experience	Frequency	Percent	Above 40 years	42	10.2
Less than 3 years	123	29.9	Total	412	100
3 – 6 years	192	46.6			
7 – 10 years	45	10.9			
Above 10 years	52	12.6			
Total	412	100			

Measurement Model Assessment

For hypotheses testing, Smart PLS 2.0 is employed. It has two stages: the first is the measurement model, and the second is the structural model. The PLS algorithm function was used to evaluate the measurement model, which includes the reliability and validity of the constructs present in the conceptual framework. Internal construct reliability and validity are examined using composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha. The reliability is calculated to ensure consistency among the variables.

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values are above 0.70 as presented in Table 2 and Figure 2, and higher values indicate higher reliability (Nunnally, 1978). Reliability values between 0.60 and 0.70 are considered acceptable in exploratory research, and values between 0.70 and 0.95 are considered satisfactory to good (Hair et al., 2019). Factor loadings are also examined, and all the values are well above 0.70, except F11, whose value is 0.69, which is almost equal to 0.70, and we wished to retain this item in the data analysis. The convergent validity

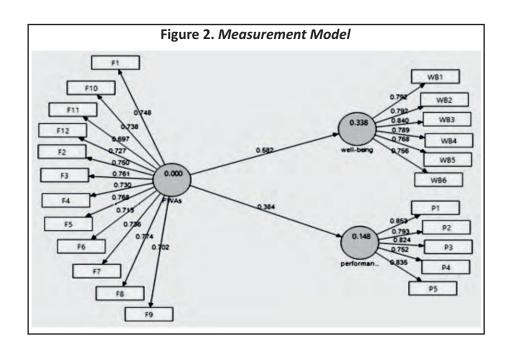


Table 2. Reliability and Validity

		-	-		
Construct	Indicator	Factor	Composite	Cronbach's	AVE
		Loading	Reliability	Alpha	
Flexible Work Arrangements	F1	0.748	0.935	0.925	0.544
	F10	0.738			
	F11	0.697			
	F12	0.727			
	F2	0.750			
	F3	0.761			
	F4	0.730			
	F5	0.768			

	F6	0.713			
	F7	0.736			
	F8	0.774			
	F9	0.702			
Performance	P1	0.853	0.906	0.878	0.660
	P2	0.793			
	Р3	0.824			
	P4	0.752			
	P5	0.835			
Personal and Family Well-Being	WB1	0.792	0.909	0.881	0.624
	WB2	0.792			
	WB3	0.840			
	WB4	0.789			
	WB5	0.768			
	WB6	0.756			

Table 3. Discriminant Validity (Fornell & Larcker Criterion)

Construct	Well - Being	Flexible Work Arrangements	Performance
Well - Being	0.737		
Flexible Work Arrangements	0.384	0.812	
Performance	0.582	0.494	0.789

was established with the help of AVE. AVE of 0.5 or more suggests that a minimum 50% of the variance is explained by the construct to its measured items (Chin, 1998). The AVE values in Table 2 are well above 0.50, which indicates that the convergent validity is well-established.

Discriminant validity is the extent to which a construct is empirically different from the rest of the constructs. As per the suggestions given by Fornell and Larcker (1981), it was suggested to use the square root of AVE of the latent variables to establish discriminant validity. The diagonally presented values in bold (Table 3) represent the square root of AVE, which are greater than the correlation values. This indicates that there is no discriminant validity issue in the model.

A cross-loading table is another method for establishing discriminant validity, which is also known as "item-level discriminant validity." Gefen and Straub (2005) stated that discriminant validity is shown when each measurement item correlates weakly with all other constructs except for the one to which it is theoretically associated. Chin (1998) proposed that each indicator loading should be more than the cross-loading values (Henseler et al., 2015). The cross-loading table (Table 4) describes that the discriminant validity is established.

Structural Model Assessment

Smart PLS 2.0 computes the beta values using bootstrapping, a resampling technique. The beta value for the relationship between FWAs and personal and family well-being is 0.582, and the beta value for the relationship between FWAs and performance is 0.384.

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Table 4. Cross Loadings Table

Indicators	Flexible Work Practices	Performance	Well - Being
F1	0.748	0.513	0.55
F10	0.738	0.203	0.315
F11	0.697	0.297	0.549
F12	0.727	0.268	0.422
F2	0.75	0.35	0.476
F3	0.761	0.134	0.375
F4	0.73	0.358	0.432
F5	0.768	0.143	0.393
F6	0.713	0.233	0.363
F7	0.736	0.283	0.377
F8	0.774	0.134	0.356
F9	0.702	0.202	0.333
P1	0.222	0.853	0.35
P2	0.447	0.793	0.55
Р3	0.235	0.824	0.335
P4	0.298	0.752	0.312
P5	0.208	0.835	0.318
WB1	0.524	0.594	0.792
WB2	0.397	0.338	0.792
WB3	0.577	0.454	0.84
WB4	0.44	0.265	0.789
WB5	0.395	0.321	0.768
Wb6	0.353	0.29	0.756

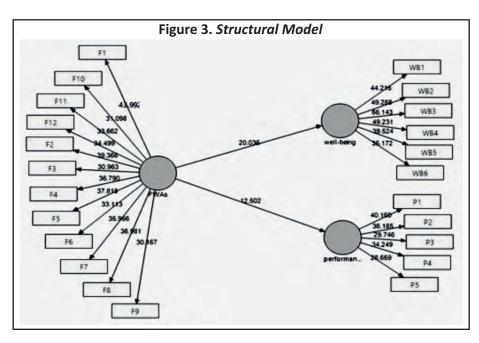


Table 5. Results of Hypotheses Testing

Нуро	theses Path	Beta	t-Statistics	Results
H1	Flexible Work Arrangement -> Well - Being	0.582	20.036	Supported
H2	Flexible Work Arrangement -> Performance	0.384	12.502	Supported
Н3	Flexible Work Arrangement* Managerial Support -> Performance	0.211	2.167	Supported
H4	Flexible Work Arrangement* Managerial Support -> Well-Being	0.160	1.82	Not supported

The t-values for the hypothesized relationships are also greater than 1.96, which indicates that FWAs have a significant and positive impact on personal and family well-being and performance outcomes. Therefore, H1 and H2 are supported. The R^2 value for personal and family well-being is 0.338, indicating that FWAs explain 33.8% variance in improving employees' personal and family well-being. The R^2 value for the performance construct is 0.148, which states that FWAs explain 14.8% of the variance in employee performance. Table 5 represents the estimated values of beta, t-statistics, and hypotheses testing results. The findings reveal a significant impact of FWAs on personal and family well-being and performance outcomes.

The R^2 change is 0.102 when managerial support is included as a moderating variable. Table 5 indicates that managerial support significantly moderates the relationship between FWAs and performance (Beta = 0.211, t = 2.167, p < 0.05). Therefore, H3 is supported; whereas, managerial support does not significantly moderate the relationship between FWAs and personal and family well-being (Beta = 0.211, t = 1.82, p > 0.05). Therefore, H4 is not supported.

Discussion

The present study adds to the literature on FWAs by examining their association with personal and family wellbeing and employee performance. Previous studies have highlighted that teleworkers' satisfaction and performance level are more, but they may also have lesser career opportunities when not working from office (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012). The present study has investigated the impact of FWAs on personal and family wellbeing and performance of employees. On an individual level, FWAs help reduce the psychological issues; another critical outcome is that the employees perceive that their personal and family well-being has improved when following the WFH protocol. Employees working with the organizations offering FWAs consider it freedom to work in their personal and professional lives.

This study's results corroborate the findings of Golden and Veiga (2008) and Nakrošienė et al. (2019). FWAs also act as a contributing factor in improving the performance of employees. Employees perceive that they get more time to rest and work out, and they can maintain a better relationship with their family members during FWAs. Jamal et al. (2021) also stated that the performance and satisfaction of employees could be enhanced by giving FWAs to the employees. The study has also found that providing technical resources to the employees during WFH helps in improving their performance and satisfaction. A similar study was conducted by Rahman et al. (2020), and the results were contradictory. FWAs do not directly impact employee performance; whereas, the relationship was mediated by innovative work behavior. Maruyama et al. (2009) also found similar results that teleworking supports the employees in maintaining stability between their occupational and private lives.

The study also sheds some light on the importance of managerial support to enhance the performance of employees during the COVID - 19 pandemic. Managerial support has gained attention due to its relationship with employee and organizational outcomes, for instance, improved performance and employee retention (Wassem et al., 2019). Very few studies have analyzed the moderating role of managerial support on the wellbeing and performance of IT employees during the COVID -19 pandemic. The findings reveal that managerial

support does not significantly moderate the relationship between FWAs and personal and family well-being, but it acts as a moderating variable on the relationship between FWAs and the performance of employees. Employees perceiving teleworking and WFH as a source of personal and family well-being would contribute effectively to the organization. Chandra (2012) also highlighted that the organizations offering FWAs allow their employees to tailor their personal agendas with less exposure to stress. Employees receiving support from the managers while working from home have better performance than those receiving less managerial support. Prior studies have concentrated more on the negative aspects of telecommuting or FWAs, but the positive aspects such as well-being cannot be ignored. Therefore, the present study has focused on the positive outcomes of FWAs or teleworking.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

The study offers some implications for the policymakers and managers to reconsider the value of FWAs for improving the well-being and performance of employees. The findings will help the organizations introduce teleworking and arrange WFH protocols in emergency situations like the COVID-19 pandemic to help the managers manage the remote work effectively. The literature has suggested that organizations adopt work-family balance policies as a source for attracting and retaining talented employees (Martin & MacDonnell, 2012). The findings will help the managers implement FWAs whenever and wherever possible depending on the requirement, which will help the employees balance their personal and professional lives, which will further enhance their productivity. FWAs can help organizations retain their talented employees, which will positively affect the organizational outcomes in the long run because human capital is identified as a source of competitive advantage (Starr et al., 2018). The results will also encourage the managers to support their employees to boost their morale and performance, especially during tough times. The employees must be equipped with the sources so that they can perform the assigned duties while working from home.

Receiving support from the managers will not only help the employees to work effectively, but it will also help in maintaining cordial relations between the employers and the employees, which can further positively affect their intention to remain loyal towards their organizations. To overcome the negative aspects of teleworking, managers need to ensure that the employees do not feel isolated as this would negatively affect their performance outcomes. To tackle such situations, managers should guide and support the employees by providing them with technological resources that can help in improving their performance. The findings would be helpful for the managers as they can design better WFH culture to boost the performance and well-being of employees.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Future Research

The present research study is among the few studies that have focused on FWA and its impact on employee outcomes. Considering the importance of the safety of employees during the COVID - 19 pandemic, the study will be beneficial for the organizations that have opted for teleworking or WFH during the pandemic. Despite the implications of the study, there are some limitations that need to be addressed. First, the study has not employed probability sampling technique which could affect the generalizability of the findings. Further, the results are based on the employees in India, therefore, future studies can be conducted in some other geographical regions or can make a comparative analysis to make the results more generalizable and support the findings. In-depth interviews and longitudinal studies could also offer a better understanding of the relationships between teleworking and employee performance.

Moreover, the long-terms effects of teleworking or FWAs could be analyzed using longitudinal studies. Lastly, future studies can make diversification in the sample during data collection, which would help to validate and generalize the findings of the present study. Rashmi et al. (2021) clarified that work-life balance has received less

attention, therefore, such constructs can be included in further studies to highlight their relationship with the well-being and performance of employees.

Authors' Contribution

Dr. Rupali Arora conceived the idea to undertake the empirical study. Dr. Pratibha extracted highly reputed research papers, filtered these based on keywords, and generated concepts and codes relevant to the study design. Dr. Rupali and Dr. Pratibha conducted the survey among the IT sector employees. Dr. Rupali wrote the introduction and review of the manuscript, and the collected data was analyzed by Dr. Pratibha using Smart PLS 2.0 to examine the study's findings.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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Appendix

Construct	Indicator	Statements
Flexible Work	F1	Flexible working arrangements help me balance life commitments.
Arrangements	F2	Flexible work options do not suit me because they tend to make me feel disconnected from the workplace.
	F3	Working shorter hours would negatively impact my career progress within the organization.
	F4	Flexible working arrangements are essential for me in order to be able to deal with other interests and responsibilities outside work.
	F5	Flexible working arrangements enable me to focus more on the job when I am at the workplace.
	F6	Working more flexible hours is essential for me in order to attend to family responsibilities.
	F7	Supervisors at my workplace react negatively to people using flexible working arrangements.
	F8	People using flexible working arrangements usually have less commitment to their work role.
	F9	Flexible working arrangements are essential for me in order to be able to manage variations in workload and responsibilities.
	F10	Other people at my workplace react negatively to people using flexible working arrangements.
	F11	People using flexible working arrangements often miss important work
		events or communications, such as staff meetings, training sessions, important notices, etc.
	F12	I would not be able to do paid work at all if I could not use flexible work arrangements.
Performance	P1	I was able to fulfill my responsibilities.
	P2	I was able to perform my work well with minimal time and effort.
	Р3	I worked towards the end result of my work.
	P4	I was able to fulfill my responsibilities.
	P5	I kept in mind the results that I had to achieve in my work.
Personal and Family	WB1	Reduced work stress.
Well-Being	WB2	Get more time to rest.
	WB3	Get more time to do exercise and physical workouts.
	WB4	Improved work-life balance.
	WB5	It brings a better quality of life.
	WB6	Maintain a better relationship with family members.
Managerial Support	M1	My manager strongly considers my goals and values.
	M2	My manager really cares about my well-being.
	M3	My manager takes pride in my accomplishments at work.
	M4	My manager cares about my general satisfaction at work.

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