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Impact of flexible working arrangements in the MNCs of Delhi

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Abstract

Flexible working refers to those working arrangements that are significantly different from regular work patterns. It allows employees to choose his/her place or time of work by exploiting the technological advancements that makes it possible to connect to work virtually without having to commute to office and/or do so during hours of the day that suits a particular employee. Various studies says that the employees who are given opportunities to work more flexibly are more dedicated and productive employees and are better able to manage their lives outside of work. To be truly flexible and effective, a workplace—its design, practices and policies—must benefit the organization and its employees. Organizations that provide more effective and flexible work environments have been shown to have more engaged, satisfied, and healthier employees with fewer intentions of looking for new employment. As workplaces become more intense, Organizations find that they must become more flexible to support employees ineffectively managing their demands at work and at home and to attract, develop, and retain the employees they need to succeed. This paper gives an insight that how workplace flexibility has impacted the organizations as well as employees in a positive way.

Keywords: Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs), Work-Life Balance, Stress, Job Sharing.

1. Introduction

“This is not the end, nor the beginning of the end, but it may be the end of the beginning.”

Winston Churchill

Flexible working arrangements refer to those working patterns different from the normal working patterns; they can involve changes to the hours an employee works, the times they are required to work or their places of work. With the kind of technological advancement that the world has witnessed, one can afford the luxury of working remotely from any part of the world during any time of the day. Some of the most popular flexible working arrangements amongst employees world over are:

- **Part-time work:** requires employees to work a lower number of hours than would be considered full time by their employer.
- **Telecommuting:** employees do not commute to a central place of work; they can work from home or from any remote location as long as they are connected to work virtually.
- **Flexi-time arrangement:** requires employees to be at work during a specified core period, but lets them otherwise arrange their hours to suit themselves.
- **Compressed work hours:** employees work the same number of hours, over fewer days staggered hours contract: employees can start and finish work at different times.
- **Annual hours contract:** employers and employees agree they will work a given number of hours during the year, but the pattern of work can vary from week to week.
- **Job sharing:** one job is shared between two people, who might work alternate days, half weeks, or alternate weeks, or one person working in the morning and one in the afternoon.
- **Term-time work:** is an arrangement whereby an employee is contracted to work a particular number of weeks per year on either a full or part-time basis. His/her non-working time is scheduled at regular, planned periods which are accounted for by a combination of annual leave and unpaid leave.

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In the other study on flexible work arrangement (FWA), researchers discussed three broad categories of FWA. flexi-time (flexibility in scheduling), tele - home working (flexibility in location), and part-time (flexibility in length of the work). While each of the arrangement could be used individually, they are frequently combined to complement each other. It should be noted that work flexibility offers convenience in planning, not reducing the working time. Thus, flexibility in work might be summarized as the ability of employee to control his/her working time duration as well as location of work (remotely from office), this ability in scheduling work suppose to be offered by the employer.

1.1. The Benefits of Flexible Working Arrangements

Flexible working arrangements address both the business context and the employee context of work, and provide a number of benefits that meet the challenges that the four forces present. Though the employee context has been the most commonly cited justification for flexibility, the business context is just as important in providing economic benefits and increased competitiveness for Indian companies. More measurements are needed regarding the business context, as in combination, they produce a persuasive list of benefits:

1. **Increased Employee Productivity:** flexible workers are measurably more productive than traditional ones, and are able to leverage new technologies to collaborate and communicate.
2. **Effective Virtual Teams:** flexibility encourages the formation of high-performing virtual teams that can confront an increasingly sophisticated workload independent of physical location.
3. **Meeting Customer Needs:** flexibility allows continuous operation across locations and time zones, meeting the complex, global and 24x7 needs of customers in and beyond the country.
4. **Matching Customer Expectations:** flexibility helps meet the growing expectations of Indian consumers who expect around-the-clock access to goods and services.
5. **Reduced Business Travel:** virtual work reduces a costly dependence on face-to-face meetings and encourages a more environmentally conscious culture.
6. **Agile Infrastructure:** reduced office occupancy and more collaborative space allows companies to be more agile about where they assign resources while saving significant real-estate costs.
7. **Increased Engagement:** individuals are able to shape their working styles to fit their circumstances and exhibit greater levels of engagement and loyalty as a result.
8. **Greater Retention:** an ability to change working habits reduces the stresses of a shifting lifestyle and enables employees to consider alternatives to leaving the organization.
9. **More Senior Women:** re-entering the workforce after motherhood requires flexibility, and such arrangements can quickly increase the proportion of senior women within a company.
10. **Attraction and Retention of Senior Executives:** the desire to work flexibly, once the focus of junior employees, is beginning to be expressed at the most senior levels of management.
11. **Flexible Retirement:** providing flexibility for older workers creates choices aside from retirement and

reduces the loss of tacit knowledge that would result from leaving work.

12. **Generational Working Styles:** a diverse offer allows different cohorts to express their own styles and reduces the potential for intergenerational conflict as a result.

2. Literature Review

The world of work is changing. The working patterns experienced by the post-war baby boomer generation (born: 1946–1964) are no longer acceptable too much of generation X (born: 1965–1980) or the millennial generation (born: 1981–2000). Work-life balance has entered the business lexicon and it is here to stay. From the perspective of employers, often faced with skills shortages and skills gaps, providing flexible working arrangements is a sine qua non for effective operation. Provision of flexible working arrangements is now part and parcel of the brand image of many organizations, particularly where the labor market for staff is global – where it was once national or even local. Moreover, in a world of always-on, always-connected economies, the line between work and home is becoming increasingly blurred. Consequently work, in terms of time (working hours) and space (location), is increasingly hybrid for many employees and employers. In the new economy of the 21st century, working practices will look very different from in the past. Changes all around us, including economic factors, are forcing organizations to re-evaluate the way they do business and develop alternative approaches to work. For example, climbing gas prices in 2008 brought flexible work arrangements into the mainstream media and at the forefront of organizations' business decisions. Some employers have turned to flexible work arrangements as one of the cost-saving strategies to assist their employees while at the same time meeting business goals. In 2008, SHRM conducted two polls on what organizations did to assist their employees with rising gas prices. From May 2008 to September 2008, there were marked increases in the percentage of organizations that provided flexible work schedules (e.g., compressed work schedule, flextime, etc.) and telecommuting to help employees deal with climbing gas prices.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To thoroughly study the concept of Flexible Work Arrangements.
2. To know whether the organizations offer provisions for Flexible Work Arrangements.
3. To study employees prospective towards Flexi work arrangements.
4. To study the various flexible work strategies implemented by the organizations.

3.1. 1. Research Methodology

- **Universe of the Study:** Employees from various MNCs of Delhi constitute the universe.
- **Sample Design:** The sample design of this study will be non-probability convenience sampling and the number of respondents is 300.
- **Method of the Study:** The research study will be of Exploratory Research.

3.1.2. Data Collection

- **Primary data-** In order to collect the primary data in this study, questionnaire and interview method is used.

➤ **Secondary data-** Research studies conducted in this area and related areas in different universities, books, magazines and journals, websites dealing with this subject and various reports published by institutions working in this field is the source of secondary data collection.

4. Analysis & Interpretation of Data



Fig 1: How many employees get the FWA facilities in the Organisations

According to the above study the out of 300 respondents 76% says that they get the FWA Facilities in the organization and 24% says that only selected people will get the benefit of FWA.

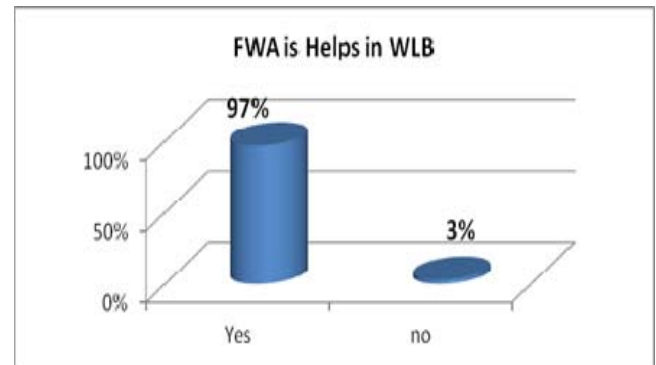


Fig 2: FWA is helpful in Work Life Balance

The above graph shows that 97% employees says that Flexible Working Arrangements helps in creating Work Life Balance.

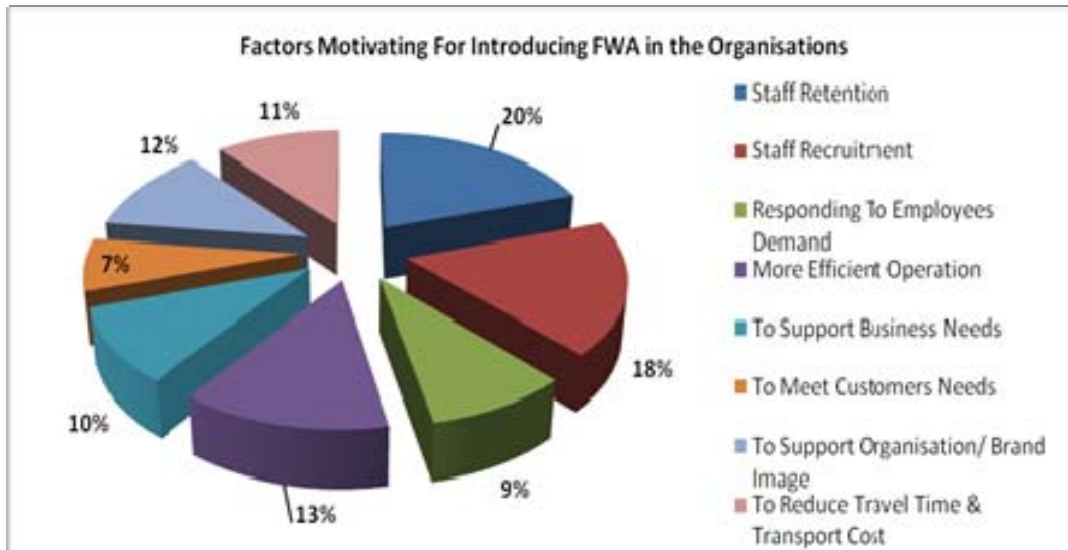


Fig 3: Factors Motivating for introducing FWA in the Organisations

The above chart shows that 20% of the respondents says Staff Retentions is the Biggest motivation factor for introducing FWA in the organisations. Further the study shows that the other factors also makes equal impact like 18% said its Staff Recruitment, 13% and 12% says it is helpful in More efficient Operation and for Supporting the Organisational and Brand Image. 11% introduce is for reducing the travel time and transport cost of the employees in the same manner 10% thinks that it is for supporting the Business Needs, 9% says it is a respond to employees demand and 7% says that it is helpful in meeting the customer’s needs.

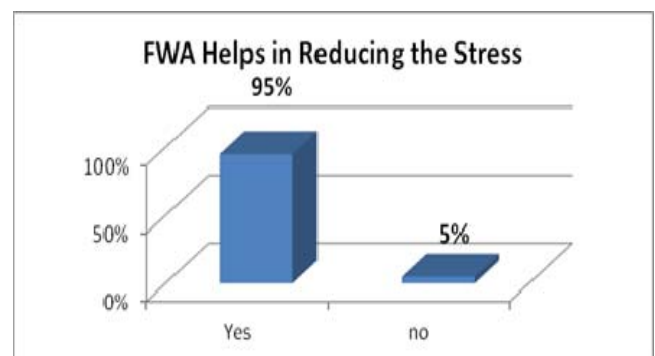


Fig 4: FWA is helpful in Reducing Stress

Flexible work police plays an important role in reducing stress of employees as shown in the chart above.

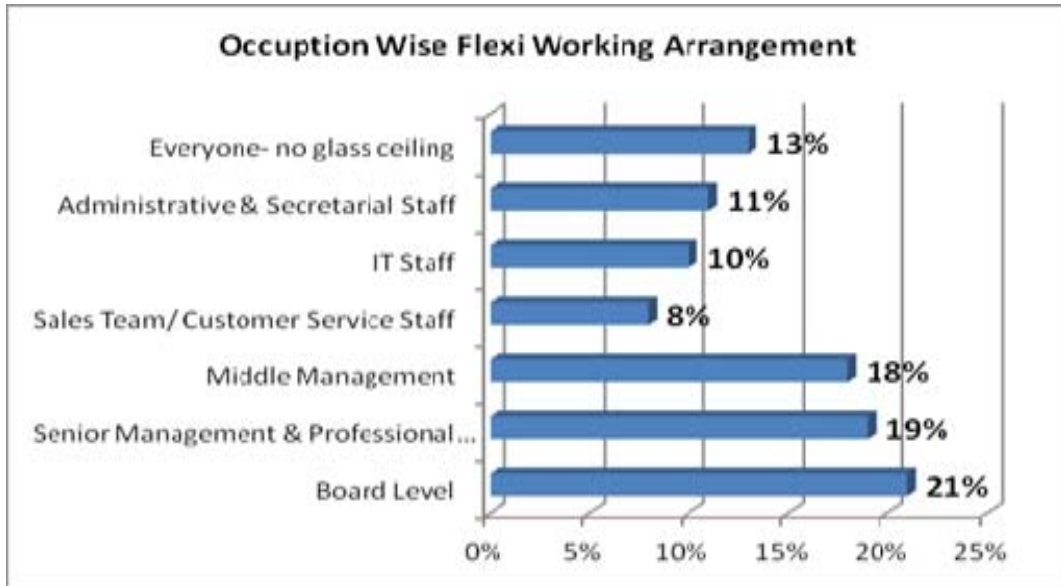


Fig 5: Occupation wise Flexi Working Arrangement

The chart above reveals that occupations wise FWA facilities will be given most preferably to the top level and managerial level management. The lower level also got this benefit but depends upon the nature of duty they will perform.

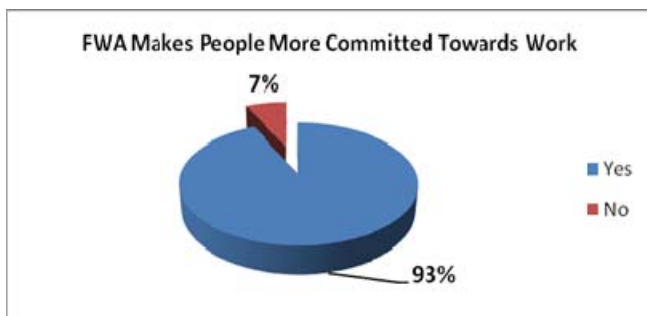


Fig 6: FWA make People more Committed towards work

The benefits of flexible work police have made employees more loyal and committed towards the organization are confirmed by the chart drawn above.

4.1. Findings of the study

The above data analysis shows that the employees give due weight age to flexi work arrangements. As indicated in study that employees feel that FWL helps them to balance work and life, reduce stress, longer tenure in the organization, more committed towards the organization. The various studies as mentioned in this paper show that organizations are also benefited in the form of increase job satisfaction, productivity, employee morale & employee engagement, reduce absenteeism & turnover, attract and retain talent employees. The study also reveals an interesting fact that employees prefer to stay longer in the institution if facilitated with flexi work arrangements.

5. Conclusion and Suggestion

In this growing economies and competitive market, Flexible work arrangements emerge as an important HR strategy to attract and retain talented employees in the institution. As the new work force is consist of knowledge workers who put great value to Flexi work arrangements and see them as an important perk. Businesses of all sizes report that flexible

working improves staff retention, with larger businesses marginally more likely to appreciate the value of flexible working for both hiring top talent and staff retention. The above study shows that introduction of flexible working hours brought some benefits for both employee and employer. Also, flexibility in employment and lower employee turnover and absenteeism are all outcomes of flexible working practices that at the end lead to increasing company’s productivity and profitability. The stress on the work impacts on employee’s personal life, which creates difficulties in finding work life balance. Stress causes some serious mental and physical problems that negatively influence on employee productivity and wellbeing. Thus it might be said that the work stress decreases employee’s work- life balance, while wellbeing contributes to higher level of work-life balance. It is the responsibility of employer to create wellness workplace (stress free and trust based environment) for employees in order to increase their productivity. There are some suggestions to improve employee retention while keeping flexi work arrangements in perspective.

1. All organizations are not implementing FWA, it’s a time which demands to consider it as an important and powerful tool to attract and retain employees.
2. All the options in respect of FWA are required to be implemented.
3. Employees should be properly educated regarding FWA as to who can avail, under what circumstances, the authority who can give permission etc., to make most of this policy.

At the end we can conclude that the organizations should provide its employees certain amount of flexibility so that they are able to balance their work life thus reducing absenteeism, attrition rate and increasing productivity. It is always a known fact that if a company takes care of the needs of the employees, the employee will serve the company better.

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