



Impact of flexible work arrangement on academic performance among faculty members in educational sectors

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Abstract

India is progressing in a very rapid speed in the space of education and technology. It goes without saying a well-built educative system backed up with the state-of-the-art technological features would be a lethal combination for achieving the great success.

From a formative educative system, Gurukul to today's hybrid mode of education we have travelled a long mile. The advent of New Education Policy 2020 which focuses on engaging students in a most effective manner provides the much-needed opportunity and space to students in exploring further. It is evident from the development in the education field that the necessary change in teaching pedagogy has already begun. Creativity and critical thinking among students' fraternity has seen the light of the day through blended learning techniques. Emphasis on synchronous learning and asynchronous learning in the academic has brought a drastic change both in terms of the tutor and the taught. In this regard a hybrid variety of delivering lectures and extending flexibility to the teachers would only add the much-needed room for further research and development activities. A continuous engagement and research bent of mind among faculty in higher education institution will always be advantageous.

Keywords: flexible work arrangements, hybrid education, blended learning, academics

Introduction

We comprehend that there is a growing need for employees to have flexible work options as they deal with several issues in both their personal and professional lives, and we acknowledge that a career is only one of many facets of life. Finding strategies to satisfy these needs will contribute to creating an environment where each of us may succeed emotionally and professionally. Flexible work arrangements provide different ways to complete tasks by using irregular working hours or locations. They won't cut back on either production or working hours. They are not a method for overcoming an impossible task or a challenging working arrangement. Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) are employment choice which involves giving employees substantial freedom in order to meet their duties and responsibilities. A FWA may allow employees to select beginning and end times and work places that are convenient for them. Employees under flexible work arrangement programs may also receive logistical assistance from their employers in the form of providing enough time for research and developing skills. Now a days there is a high requirement for flexible work arrangements in each and every sector due to the modern environment.

Some of the universities which offer FWA are as follows:

Depauw University

located in Indiana, Midwestern United State, offers alternative schedules like instead of normal 7 to 4 shift can accommodate 8 to 5 or weekend/evening schedules based on requirement, flexible/temporary arrangements – this means allow offset for after hour work necessity for some jobs or temporary changes are occasionally required for a short-term scenario (i.e., urgent situations, home appointments, etc.)

“Remote and hybrid work arrangements” like telecommuting or telework is also provided. Some of the benefits of this FWA are it enhances employee's wellbeing. This also helps the university to have diversity and equity as it benefits more of female employees. Productivity through ^[1] lower turnover, fewer absences, and potential for service hours expansion and modification. achieving additional university goals, such as improving office layouts and increasing the use of technology for tasks and outputs that can be completed and/or provided remotely.

Stevens Institute of Technology

located in New Jersey, U.S.A offers FWA like “Predominantly Remote, Hybrid and On-campus”. These labels are given to units and positions rather than to specific employees.

The FWA programme has five main benefits, including maintaining a student-centric focus, improving sustainable working practises that reduce office footprint and costs, increasing employee engagement and retention, increasing opportunities to attract top talent as the modern workforce prioritises work-life balance, and improving the university's capacity to operate virtually at any time and react swiftly to unforeseen future events ^[2].

The University of Western Australia

UWA provides working conditions which includes flexible working arrangements as part of “Flexible Work and Leave Practices Policy under the Fair Work Act” 2009 ^[3]. Although The University of Western Australia employees have the right to work flexibly, not all employees have access to all flexible work and leave choices.

FWA offered at different universities and higher education institutions

In the wake of digitalization going like merry-go-round in almost all the fields, no educational institution would be left far behind. More so every Higher Education Institutions would definitely seek an opportunity to offer the best to their faculty members. In terms of providing the much needed enhancements and facilities to enrich teaching experience and develop the latest pedagogy in the academic space. Many Higher Educational Institutions are coming forward in extending flexible working arrangements to its staff members. There are quite a few front runners which include the following global universities and educational institutions:

Montclair State University offers compressed schedule, flexitime schedule and hybrid schedule to its employees in terms of offering FWA. Oakland University goes one step ahead and gives its employees adjustable meal period, compressed workweek, flexitime shift swaps and remote work. Pennsylvania State University offers 100% remote work, hybrid schedule, compressed work hours, staggered start and end times, alternative shifts, mid day flex time, core hours, reduced schedule. Drexel University offers its employees compressed work schedule, core business hours, flex schedule, job sharing and telework. University of Minnesota does have the system of offering flex schedule or flex time, compressed workweek, reduced work week, remote work or flex space and job sharing to its work force. Ohio University offers flex work and alternative work schedule to its employees. Saint Louis University also offers remote work and flexible scheduling arrangements.

In today's context initiatives have been taken by Universities and Higher Educational Institutions to bring in much needed flexibility in worksphere. The ultimate motive is to ensure research occupies the front seat and cutting edge research takes place in all Higher Educational Institution's.

Statement of the problem

There is always a dilemma when it comes to imparting education in a hybrid platform. What is been practiced so far in the classrooms will have to face challenges when it is conducted via online mode. In this regard, the educational institutions will have to embrace and adopt technology at desired levels and give much needed facilities to faculty members and help them to deliver to their potential. Faculty members find it highly difficult and challenging to manage research activities alongside their teaching commitments. To perform at the highest sphere, one needs to be given a good amount of flexible working arrangements. This research paper aims to find out the different FWA options provided to faculty members at their respective educational institutions.

Scope of the study

The paper identifies the best practices of FWA, its advantages and limitations across various educational institutions. It also identifies how academicians facilitated with the advantages of FWA. The scope of the study is very vast by considering the fact that flexibility in work can promote further research and development activities. Hence the researcher has narrowed down the study and has limited the institutions. Only few selected colleges have been chosen to restrict the work for further publication of the article.

Operational definitions

According to Workplace Flexibility 2010, "Flexible work arrangements(FWA) as any one of a spectrum of work structures that alters the time and /or place that work gets done on a regular basis". Flexible work arrangements refer to arrangements where one can work at their comfort and convenience. It helps employees to work as per their requirements.

Compressed work hour: schedules permit regular employees to do 16 to 20 hours of work compressed into less than five workdays. For example, instead of putting in four hours daily over five days to work 20 hours a week, faculty can complete the same number of hours per week by working four days for 5 hours. The reason behind compressed workhour schedule is to offer an extra day off.

Hybrid/blended learning: is a combination of traditional face to face learning along with modern online learning techniques like interacting with peers, instructors etc where in lessons and assessments can be completed digitally.

Remote work: refers to a work arrangement that offers employees more elasticity in picking their work place. A remote work arrangement lets employees select where they want to work instead of binding to working at a stated place where the business is situated.

The 2021 Future Workforce Report predicts that 40.7 million American professionals will be fully remote in the next five years. Even the social media behemoth Facebook expects 50% of its employees to work remotely by 2030.

Part-time work: refers to a position where an employee works less than 20 hours per week. The essential work hours are constant for a part-time employee. Often part-time roles are intended to attract students, parents, and other working peoples who don't want to or are not able to work full time. Such work arrangements also help businesses

Review of literature

- Amrita Chanda (2020) studied on a topic understanding "flexible work arrangement and it's need in India: Policy intervention as a step towards holistic work life balance". The study makes an effort to comprehend flexible work arrangements in the workplace, especially concerning for women in India. The study is based on secondary data and only five respondents were considered for research. The study suggests that the majority of women's professional and life choices are influenced by their families. The study revealed that there is no availability of flexible work for teachers in colleges.
- Anna Lahti (2017) have undertaken research on topic "the perceived impact of flexible working hours on work-life balance in the educational sector in Finland". For this study primary data consisting of 46 respondents was considered. This study's primary goal was to investigate the relationship between flexible work schedules and work-life balance in Finland's educational sector. The research was completed by critically analysing and reading up on the research on the adaptability of work-life balance and through gathering data through interviews. To conclude the researcher found despite the fact that Finland has a

decent teacher work-life balance, work load has considerably increased. This study suggest that further analysis can be made with regard to gender age and cultural difference as it gives more insights on how it impacts each stage or situation of work and family life. It could also give space to examine the findings globally to see how various educational systems affect teachers' flexibility and work-life balance and how those factors could be addressed.

- Ciara Smyth and *et al* (2020) undertaken a research on title "University staff and flexible work: inequalities, tensions and challenges in Australia". A study mainly focused on prior to the quick adoption of new work or practises in response to COVID 19, there were substantial tensions and disparities that feature flexible work in a university context. For the above study a sample size of 60 respondent from various selected Universities were considered. A focus group discussion was adopted for this study and it was discovered that FWAs were linked to a variety of tensions and inequalities before the epidemic. Respondent are primarily concerned with flexibility in the workday as well as work from home than other options. Further it was noticed that FWA was complex to some staffs to adopt due to employees classification and staff access and use are determined by duties, seniority, career status, job security, and managerial discretion. A study revealed that it was tough for junior staff to access FWA than senior staff as they were feared about their job security.
- Dr Megan Paull and *et al* (2009) undertaken research on "flexible work arrangements in higher education: a tale of two groups". In this article the author emphasises the diminishing gap between teaching and non-academic personnel, due to the concentration of work in the higher education sector. The paper also highlights on the fact that the staff belonging to the teaching domain are obligated to be present for non-academic services to the student, since the contemporary student-institutional relationship has evolved similar to the organisation-customer relationship. On the other hand, there has been flexibility in the workspace and also in the work culture of these educational institutions due to the progressive mode of learning.
- Fleur Sharafizad Edith and *et al* (2011) examined a research on title "Flexible Work Arrangements Accessibility in a University Environment". The study indicates that general staff have better access and utilise flexible work arrangements compared to Academic staffs. For the above study mixed method was adopted and data were collected from a sample size of an Australian university has 495 academic and support staff members.. The study found that the workload of academic has increased and this leads to decrease in the attractiveness of academic career. According to the report, the majority of academic staff are having trouble keeping up with the growing workload and it can be resolved only from the changes in the universities traditional academic work and administrative function.
- Mayeesha Fairuz Rahman (2019) conducted a research on title Impact of Flexible Work Arrangements on Job Satisfaction Among the Female Teachers in the Higher Education Sector in Bangladesh. A study stressed on

the relationship between Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA), Employee Job satisfaction and Work-life Balance of the female teachers in the higher education sector of the country. For the above study secondary data and hypothesis were developed n to test those data primary data were collected from a sample size of 203 respondents. It was found that FWA have positive impact on both Employee Job Satisfaction as well as Work-life Balance. Further it was noticed that one of the elements of FWA, namely, Compressed Workweek, is found to have values less than the significance level after performing regression analysis. Further it was identified that most of the independent variables like flexitime, telecommuting and job sharing have important influence on the dependent variables i.e. work life balance and job satisfaction. A study revealed that if organisations strongly incorporates FWA then employees can be able to maintain a balance between work and life and which is more beneficial for female employees and this will enhance job satisfaction. A study also stated that one of the factor compressed workweek is not relevant for work life and job satisfaction. A author states that there is a scope for further study as this study is covered only on female teachers in the higher education sector in a country.

- Zohra Ghali-Zinoubi and *et al* (2021) conducted research on title "E-learning in era of Covid-19 pandemic; impact of flexible working arrangements on work pressure, work life conflicts and academics satisfaction". The study examines how FWA affects academic satisfaction, work-life conflicts, and workload strain. The study has found out that there is a substantial increase in the disruption levels of personal-professional spaces, due to the introduction of FWA in academics during COVID 19 pandemic. The study has been focused on those respondents, who are married females respondent with dependent kids.

Objectives

- To study the existing structure of FWA in educational institutions
- To study the attrition rate of employees while FWA is being offered.
- To study the improvement in productivity among the employees who are offered FWA.
- To offer best practices followed in educational institutions offering FWA.

Research methodology

Research methodology adopted for the purpose of the study is primary analytical and survey based.

Data collection

Data is collected using primary and secondary sources. Questionnaire has been set in order to collect data from primary respondents.

Hypothesis of the study

Hypothesis No.1

H₀: There is no significant difference between the genders- male and female with respect to attrition rate.

H₁: There is significant difference between the genders- male and female with respect to attrition rate.

Hypothesis No.2

H₀: There is no association between the gender and perception about the improvement in productivity due to FWA.

H₁: There is association between the gender and perception about the improvement in productivity due to FWA.

Sampling method

Sampling method adopted for the purpose of the study is simple random sampling.

Sampling frame

Sampling frame includes faculty members in Colleges, Universities and Higher Educational Institutions.

SAMPLE SIZE

A sample size of 30 respondents has been chosen from approximately 20 colleges for the purpose of the study.

FWA will increase your productivity

| Response | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Strongly Agree | 13 | 43% |
| Agree | 13 | 43% |
| Neutral | 4 | 13% |
| Disagree | 0 | 0% |
| Strongly disagree | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

The above chart clearly highlights that majority of the respondents agree that FWA will increase productivity.

Attrition rate can be brought down by introducing FWA

| Response | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Strongly Agree | 5 | 17% |
| Agree | 18 | 60% |
| Neutral | 6 | 20% |
| Disagree | 1 | 3% |
| Strongly disagree | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Majority of the respondents opine that FWA will bring down attrition rate.

Hybrid teaching effectively supports FWA

| Response | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Strongly Agree | 6 | 20% |
| Agree | 15 | 50% |
| Neutral | 6 | 20% |
| Disagree | 3 | 10% |
| Strongly disagree | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Independent Samples Test

Table 2

| Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|------|------------------------------|------|---------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|-------|
| Attrition rate | | F | Sig. | t | df | P-Value | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| | | | | | | | | | Equal variances assumed | 1.621 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | .512 | 16.016 | .616 | .15000 | .29287 | -.47081 | .77081 | |

The above chart shows that highest number of the respondents are in favour that hybrid teaching effectively supports FWA.

FWA is a boon to teachers, but curbs the learning system of a student

| Response | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Strongly Agree | 9 | 30% |
| Agree | 17 | 57% |
| Neutral | 2 | 7% |
| Disagree | 2 | 7% |
| Strongly disagree | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Large number of respondents have opined that FWA is a boon to teachers, but negatively affects the learning system of the students.

FWA in teaching disrupts work-life balance

| Response | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Strongly Agree | 4 | 13% |
| Agree | 9 | 30% |
| Neutral | 6 | 20% |
| Disagree | 9 | 30% |
| Strongly disagree | 2 | 7% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

The above chart shows that there is a mixed opinion with regard to the statement that “FWA in teaching disrupts work-life balance”. Equal number of respondents agree as well as disagree to this.

Results of hypothesis testing using statistical tools

- **Independent T-test for gender and attrition rate**

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between Male and Female with respect to attrition rate

Alternative Hypothesis: There is significant difference between Male and Female with respect to attrition rate

Group Statistics

Table 1

| | Gender | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|----------------|--------|----|--------|----------------|-----------------|
| Attrition rate | male | 10 | 2.2000 | .78881 | .24944 |
| | female | 20 | 2.0500 | .68633 | .15347 |

The mean value is different between male and female

Since P value is more than 0.1, null hypothesis is accepted at 10 % level with regard to perception regarding attrition

rate. Hence There is no significant difference between Male and Female with respect to attrition rate

▪ **The Cross tabulation between the gender and perception about the improvement of productivity due to FWA**

Table 3

| Gender | | Productivity | | | Total |
|--------|-----------------------|----------------|--------|---------|--------|
| | | strongly agree | agree | neutral | |
| male | Count | 6 | 3 | 1 | 10 |
| | % within productivity | 46.2% | 23.1% | 25.0% | 33.3% |
| female | Count | 7 | 10 | 3 | 20 |
| | % within productivity | 53.8% | 76.9% | 75.0% | 66.7% |
| Total | Count | 13 | 13 | 4 | 30 |
| | % within productivity | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Interpretation

The number of female respondents who opine that the productivity increases with implementation of FWA is higher than the male respondents. A scarce population of the sample are neutral with the opinion.

Chi-Square Test for gender and perception about the Improvement of productivity due to FWA

Chi-Square Tests

Table 4

| | Value | df | P Value |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|---------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 1.702 ^a | 2 | .427 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 1.702 | 2 | .427 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 1.217 | 1 | .270 |
| N of Valid Cases | 30 | | |

a. 4 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.33.

Null Hypothesis: There is no association between Gender and Perception about the improvement in productivity due to FWA

Alternative Hypothesis: There is association between Gender and Perception about the improvement in productivity due to FWA

Since P value is more than 0.1, the null hypothesis is accepted at 10% level of significance. There is no association between Gender and Perception about the improvement in productivity due to FWA.

Limitations

- This research paper could only be applicable for a period of six months or so due to dynamic market condition which could be changed.
- Due to the time and geographical constrain, the size of the population is limited.
- Introduction of FWA in teaching contradicts the rudimental objective of effective learning in students as it includes blended learning causing hindrance in their learning system.
- The respondents’ opinion is scattered with regards to their perception of disruption of work life balance. This may change with increase in the sample size.

Findings

- The study found that majority of the respondents agreed that introducing FWA will increase their productivity.

- The study reveals that majority of the respondents are in favour that FWA will bring down attrition rate.
- It is found that a greater number of the respondents are in favour that FWA will give an option of multitasking.
- The study shows that highest number of the respondents are in favour that hybrid teaching effectively supports FWA.
- It shows that highest number of the respondents are in favour that blended learning is an effective tool of FWA.
- It is found that teachers are benefited from FWA, but learning system of a student are disturbed.
- It is found that there is a mixed opinion that FWA in teaching disrupts work-life balance.
- The study found that FWA is an integral part in pedagogy.

Suggestions

- In order to increase the productivity of the academicians, FWA should be introduced in the educational institutions.
- The author suggest that, to increase the learning effectiveness among the students FWA(blended teaching) can be introduced for theoretical subjects only, thus creating a win-win situation for both students and teachers.
- The author says that hybrid teaching is an supporting effective tool of an FWA. So hybrid teaching method should be adopted in the educational institutions.
- The author also suggest that in order to reduce the attrition rate in the educational institutions, FWA should be adopted.
- By introducing FWA, faculty members are having options for performing multi-tasks which will enhance their skills and knowledge.
- Introduction of certification courses during academic vacation reduces the workload of teachers during their regular academic timeframe. This creates additional time for the teachers to dedicate to their personal life or for research activities.

Conclusion

Sustainability is a very big word when it comes to any field. A education institution are not far from having and maintaining sustainable practices. The recent catastrophe has made the education institution to seek better teaching practices. This research paper attempts to find out the different FWA offered to faculty members at their respective educational institutions. It could be seen through

the paper that there is no association between the gender and perception about the improvement in productivity when FWA is offered. There is no relativity between the genders when it comes to the attrition aspects. There is a group of respondents who opine that if research-oriented activities have to be performed by the faculty members, their needs to be a proper time allocation. Offering FWA in educational institutions is no more a tabu but an integral part of the pedagogy. Blended learning and flipped classroom can only be as effective as the management and needs a proper backing up for teachers to be more effective.

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