

IMPACT OF FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Lilian Azaka

lilian.azaka@dou.edu.ng

234-703-130-3739

Department of Psychology

Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Nigeria,

Kaizer Victoria Omenebele

Victoria.kaizer@dou.edu.ng

234-803-545-5770

Department of Public Administration

Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Nigeria

&

Lydia Audu-Ibrahim

Department of Psychology

University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) on work-life balance and career development, focusing on how flexibility impacts employees' ability to balance personal and professional demands while advancing their careers. Data were collected from 127 employed adults across various sectors, using standardised questionnaires to assess FWAs, work-life balance, and career development. Results revealed a significant positive relationship between FWAs and work-life balance, which indicates that employees who use flexible arrangements report higher levels of personal well-being and reduced work-life conflict. Findings also reveal a positive, though less robust, association with career development. While flexibility supports career satisfaction to some extent, concerns remain regarding reduced visibility and advancement opportunities for employees working remotely or with non-traditional schedules.

Findings support the Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) model. This suggests that FWAs function as a valuable resource in managing job demands. However, they also highlight the need for organisational support structures, such as mentorship programs and virtual networking, to address potential limitations in career advancement for FWA users. These insights underscore the importance of a balanced approach to FWAs while emphasising the need for inclusive strategies that promote both work-life balance and career growth. Future research is encouraged to further investigate these dynamics through longitudinal studies and to explore industry-specific variations in FWA effectiveness.

Keywords: *Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs), Work-life balance, Career Development, Employee well-being, Organisational support*

INTRODUCTION

Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) have become integral to organisational strategies to enhance employee well-being, productivity, and retention (George & Poluru, 2024; Kumar *et al.*, 2023). FWAs, which encompass remote work, flexible hours, compressed workweeks, and job sharing, have gained traction as employees seek greater control over their work schedules and locations (Solihu *et al.*, 2023). Technological advances and significant global events have accelerated this shift towards flexibility, notably the COVID-19 pandemic, which heightened the demand for adaptable work structures (Nguyen & Armoogum, 2021; Felstead & Reuschke, 2023). While FWAs offer better work-life balance and more personal freedom, their impact on career growth is mixed, bringing opportunities and challenges for employee advancement (Adisa *et al.*, 2024; Lee & Joseph, 2019).

FWAs are widely recognised for enhancing work-life balance by allowing employees to adjust their schedules to meet personal commitments (Siddiqui, 2020), which has been linked with

reduced stress and higher productivity (Austin-Egole *et al.*, 2022; Sekhar & Patwardhan, 2023). Nevertheless, the benefits of FWAs are not universally experienced; their effectiveness depends on several factors, including organisational culture, role-specific demands, and managerial support (Kelly *et al.*, 2020). For example, employees with more autonomy and control over their work environments report higher levels of work-life balance. In contrast, those without adequate support may struggle with the blurred boundaries between work and personal life (Kossek & Lautsch, 2018). This dynamic is particularly evident in remote work, where the physical distance from a traditional office setting may lead to reduced visibility with management, potentially impacting career advancement (Franken *et al.*, 2022; Kniffin *et al.*, 2021).

This study examines the dual impact of FWAs on employees' work-life balance and career development. It investigates how FWA's impact is perceived and its influence on the experience of well-being and career growth. By analysing the factors that enhance or hinder the effectiveness of FWAs, this research aims to provide insights into how flexible work arrangements can support both personal well-being and professional growth in today's evolving work environment.

Statement of Problem

While FWAs have brought significant benefits, such as reduced burnout and improved retention rates (Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2020; Austin-Egole *et al.*, 2020; Xiang *et al.*, 2022; Timms *et al.*, 2020), questions remain about their broader impact on employee outcomes. A growing body of research suggests that FWAs can improve work-life balance by giving employees greater control over their schedules and reducing stress levels (White & Maniam, 2020; Subramaniam *et al.*, 2020; Shifrin & Michel, 2022). However, concerns persist regarding the potential downsides of FWAs, particularly in career development. Employees working remotely or with flexible schedules may face challenges in accessing essential career growth opportunities, including mentorship, networking, and visibility with senior leadership (Haque, 2023; Olawale *et al.*, 2024). These factors are traditionally important for career advancement, and their absence can lead to slower professional growth or limited access to promotion.

This study aims to fill a critical gap in understanding by examining how FWAs influence both work-life balance and career development. Specifically, it seeks to identify the conditions that determine whether FWAs function as supportive resources or unintended barriers. This research will help organisations understand how to design FWAs that support employees' well-being and career growth without limiting advancement opportunities.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to assess the impact of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) on employee work-life balance and career development. The specific objectives are:

1. To measure the impact of FWAs on employees' work-life balance.
2. To evaluate how FWAs influence career development opportunities.

Research Questions

To guide the research, the following questions are proposed:

1. What is the impact of flexible work arrangements on employees' work-life balance?
2. How do flexible work arrangements affect career development opportunities for employees?

Hypotheses

This study tests the following hypotheses:

- H1: Flexible work arrangements have a positive impact on employees' work-life balance.
H2: Flexible work arrangements positively influence career development opportunities.

METHOD

This section describes the research design, participants, sampling techniques, instruments, procedure, and data analysis methods used in the study. It provided a comprehensive understanding of the approach undertaken to achieve the research objectives and resolve research questions.

Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationship between FWAs, work-life balance, and career development. The cross-sectional approach allows for the collection of data at a single point in time (Wang & Cheng, 2020). A quantitative approach is utilised to facilitate objective measurement and statistical analysis of the variables.

Participants

The study targets employed adults in various sectors that offer flexible work options. Participants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

1. Employed in organisations that implement FWAs (e.g., remote work, flextime, compressed work weeks).
2. A minimum of one year of experience with FWAs in their current or previous roles.
3. Willingness to participate voluntarily in the study.

A sample size of 150 participants was targeted to ensure adequate statistical power, which enables robust analysis of correlations and regression outcomes. The final sample included 127 responses after removing incomplete or invalid responses.

Sampling Technique

The study used purposive sampling, selecting participants based on specific criteria relevant to FWAs and work-life balance. Recruitment was conducted via professional networking sites, such as LinkedIn, and online professional groups where FWAs are prevalent. This approach allowed for efficient identification of individuals familiar with flexible work practices and ensured relevant data.

Instruments

The study utilised standardised questionnaires to measure FWAs, work-life balance, and career development. The instruments include:

1. Flexible Work Arrangements Scale (FWA Scale): This scale, adapted from Leggese & Mohammed (2020), measures participants' experience with different types of FWAs. It includes items such as "My job does not have rigid start and end times." and "My job gives me the flexibility to choose my start and end times by fulfilling the mandatory core hours." Responses are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The scale has demonstrated good internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.85$).
2. Work-Life Balance Scale (WLB Scale): This study uses the Work-Life Balance Scale (WLBS) by Fisher et al. (2009), which was translated and revised to better measure work-life balance across various jobs and organisations. The scale assesses four aspects: work interference with personal life (WIPL), personal life interference with work (PLIW), work enhancement of personal life (WEPL), and personal life enhancement of work (PLEW). It includes 17 items and has a high reliability with a Cronbach Alpha of 0.942.
3. Career Development Questionnaire (CDQ): This questionnaire developed by Efenji (2023) measures participants' perceptions of career growth and advancement opportunities. It used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The scale has an internal consistency reliability of $\alpha = 0.90$.

Procedure

The study's data collection was conducted through online surveys distributed via Google Forms. Participants were informed about the research purpose, and consent was obtained before survey participation. To protect participant confidentiality, no identifying information was collected, and responses were stored in a secure, password-protected file. Participants were provided with instructions for each section of the survey, ensuring clarity and consistency in responses. The survey took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete, with follow-up reminders sent to encourage responses. Incomplete responses were excluded to ensure data quality.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26). Descriptive statistics were used to summarise participant demographics, such as age, gender, and employment sector, as well as general response trends. Pearson correlation analysis examined the relationships between flexible work arrangements (FWAs), work-life balance, and career development. Hierarchical regression analysis was then conducted to test the predictive influence of FWAs on work-life balance and career development. Independent variables were entered in steps to assess the incremental impact of FWAs while controlling for factors like job role and organisational support. A significance level of $p < .05$ was set to ensure the robustness of the findings.

RESULTS

The study sample consisted of 127 employed adults across various sectors who had experience with FWAs. Participants were from sectors implementing remote work, flexible hours, and compressed workweeks. The mean scores for the Flexible Work Arrangements Scale ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.76$), Work-Life Balance Scale ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.62$), and Career Development Questionnaire ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.88$) indicated moderate to high levels of perceived flexibility, work-life balance, and career growth opportunities, respectively.

Table 1: correlation matrix of Flexible Work Arrangements, work-life balance, and career development

Variables	1	2	3
1. Flexible Work Arrangement	-		
2. Work-Life Balance	.57**	-	
3. Career Development	.31*	.18*	-

Note. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between FWAs and work-life balance ($r = 0.57$, $p < 0.01$). This finding indicates that employees with flexible arrangements report better balance between personal and professional demands. Results revealed that FWAs were positively associated with career development ($r = 0.31$, $p < 0.05$), though the relationship was weaker compared to work-life balance.

Table 2: Hierarchical Regression Analysis Results for the Impact of Flexible Work Arrangements on Work-Life Balance and Career Development (N = 127)

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	β	t	B	β	t	B	β	t
1. Flexible Work Arrangement	.45	.38	4.72**	.37	.32	4.15**	.33	.29	3.84**
2. Work-Life Balance				.42	.35	4.43**	.38	.32	4.12**
3. Career Development							.28	.24	3.15**
R ²	.144			.266			.321		
ΔR^2	.144			.122			.055		
F	22.28**			28.94**			25.16**		
ΔF	22.28**			26.67**			9.92**		

Hierarchical regression analysis was performed to examine the predictive influence of FWAs on work-life balance and career development. FWAs were a significant predictor of work-life balance ($\beta = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$), explaining 34% of the variance. FWAs were a less robust predictor of career development ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.05$), accounting for 9% of the variance. The results confirm the hypotheses that FWAs positively impact work-life balance (H1) and career development (H2). However, the findings suggest that the influence on career growth is less pronounced, highlighting a potential trade-off for employees who rely heavily on non-traditional work arrangements.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the relationship between flexible work arrangements (FWAs), work-life balance, and career development in the contemporary workplace. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation between FWAs and both work-life balance and career development, though with varying degrees of impact. The analysis provides important insights into how modern workplace flexibility influences employee well-being and professional growth.

The results demonstrate a strong positive relationship between FWAs and work-life balance, corroborating recent research highlighting flexibility as a crucial factor in employee wellbeing (Wang et al., 2023; Nerobkova et al., 2022). Of note is the heightened significance of this relationship in the post-pandemic workplace, where employees increasingly prioritize flexibility in their work arrangements (Yin et al., 2023). The study found that employees with access to FWAs reported significantly higher levels of work-life satisfaction, reduced stress, and improved personal time management. These findings suggest that flexibility serves as a crucial resource in helping employees manage the competing demands of their professional and personal lives.

While FWAs showed a positive correlation with career development, this relationship was more nuanced than the work-life balance outcomes. This finding aligns with recent studies suggesting that while remote and flexible work can enhance productivity and job satisfaction, it may present challenges for career advancement (Venkatesh & Kachhi, 2024). The "proximity bias" remains a significant concern, where employees working remotely or with flexible schedules may experience reduced visibility and fewer informal networking opportunities (Hincapie & Costa, 2024). This highlights the need for organizations to develop specific strategies to ensure career development opportunities remain accessible to all employees, regardless of their work arrangement.

From a theoretical perspective, this research extends several important frameworks. The findings support and expand the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) by demonstrating how FWAs function as a critical resource in managing modern work demands. The study suggests that flexibility acts as both a buffer against job stress and a facilitator of personal resource management. More so, the research contributes to emerging theoretical perspectives on virtual career development, which suggests that traditional career development models need revision to accommodate the unique dynamics of flexible work environments (Raghuram et al. 2019).

The practical implications of these findings are substantial for organizations implementing FWAs. Organizations should focus on developing hybrid-specific leadership competencies (Yozi & Mbokota, 2024) and implementing technology-enabled mentoring programs (Olabiya, 2023). Regular structured check-ins combining professional development and work-life balance discussions are essential (Hurtado et al., 2024). Organizations should also establish clear performance metrics focused on outcomes rather than presence and develop remote-first career advancement pathways (Eckerd et al., 2021). Training programs addressing

unconscious bias against remote workers have become increasingly important in ensuring equitable treatment of all employees (Onyeador et al., 2021).

While this study provides valuable insights, several limitations should be noted. The cross-sectional design limits causal inferences, and the self-reported data may introduce certain biases. Also, the study's industry representation could be broader. Future research opportunities include conducting longitudinal studies examining long-term career trajectories in flexible work environments, investigating industry-specific FWA effectiveness, analysing technology's role in mediating FWA outcomes, and examining generational differences in FWA utilization and outcomes.

Conclusion

This study reinforces the positive role of FWAs in enhancing work-life balance and suggests a nuanced benefit for career development. While FWAs significantly support work-life balance, their impact on career growth is moderated by visibility challenges, necessitating targeted organisational strategies. These findings contribute to a more balanced understanding of FWAs and highlight the need for organisations to foster inclusive practices that ensure flexible arrangements are beneficial across all dimensions of employee experience. By addressing these considerations, organisations can fully realise the potential of FWAs to enhance both employee satisfaction and career advancement in the modern workplace.

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