

Flexible Working Hours versus Quality of Life: A Case Study of IoBM

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Abstract

Flexible work arrangement provides employees with some limited discretion as to the starting and stopping for their work day, while requiring some core hours. Thus according to many prominent researchers, it provides employees some control and independence over their lives. This study would try to present the findings of research carried out mainly among IoBM faculty for the purpose of investigating/establishing a relationship between flexible work schedules and quality of life of employees under Pakistani working and living conditions. Researchers believe that every culture has different sets of variables to measure quality of life. Western countries may give importance to family life where as in a different culture economic independence might become a very important variable to measure quality of life. In this research, researchers will try to highlight variables specific to Pakistani environments and their impact on employees. Dependent variables may range from ease in commutation, better sleep quality to better concentration. Researchers have selected 42 faculty members (21 each of male and female) out of 65 employees from IoBM for the main survey as IoBM has already implemented the system. Researchers have tried to use descriptive and correlation analysis to establish trends between quality of life and gender, marital status etc. Researchers believe that this study would at least create awareness among employers about the benefits of flextime, and thus create avenues towards humanistic approach.

Keywords: *Flexible work arrangements, quality of life*

1. Introduction

With the advent of humanistic approach in Organizational Development, the West has turned its attention towards development of human capital. The West has started recognizing humans as tools for value addition, for optimizing these tools; they are focusing more now on human side rather than scientific management. However, we need to analyze whether Pakistani organizations have kept pace with this change. Researchers have endeavored to analyze this situation by narrowing it down to one aspect of humanistic approach, namely flextime schedules. In the ensuing paragraphs, researchers have tried initially to define the true concept of flextime, moving to variables involved and finally critique of the literature available vis-à-vis Pakistani environment.

This study is aimed at finding relationship between various flexi hours and perceived quality of life attached with them, by different set of employees in business schools of

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Karachi. The main objective of study is to establish a relationship between various flexi hours schedule and their effects on employees. These effects are bracketed in terms of gender, marital status, and family size. Thus providing guidelines for employers who want to initiate flexi hours in their organizations.

The limitation of the study is that it is focused on employees (faculty) of business schools. At times, this limited scope generates findings which are peculiar to a specific environment. Caution may be exercised in projecting these findings for other types of organizations.

1.1. Significance

As indicated above, flexitime has emerged as a potent tool for not only maintaining quality of life but also in turn boosting motivation levels of employees. Females have appeared as predominant gainers out of flexitime. However significance of the same has remained below par under Pakistani environment.

Most of the private and public organizations are either reluctant to initiate these programs (mostly due to productivity concerns) or they have indulged in these programs just for the sake of cosmetic changes. Researchers envisage that this research would highlight areas for employers to use flexitime programs as motivational tools in increasing productivity of the organization.

1.2. Methodology

Researchers have focused on both qualitative and quantitative research. For qualitative research secondary data/focused group interviews were used .For quantitative research Institute of Business Management (IoBM) was chosen out of five major Business Schools of Karachi.

Questionnaire was used for IoBM. In all 42 faculty members out of the total of 65 were questioned (21 males and 21 female). We made efforts to interview all of the faculty members; however some were unavailable and few refused.

1.3. Hypothesis

- Perception of quality of life is independent of gender
- Perception of quality of life is independent of family size
- 50% of employees believe that flexi hour system has improved workplace

1.4. Variables

1.4.1. Independent Variable

- Gender
- Family size

- Marital Status

1.4.2. Dependent Variable

- Time Devoted to family
- Ease in commutation
- Personal Commitment
- Stress

2. Literature Review

According to Hyland (2002), unlike other flexible work arrangements, flextime focuses mainly on the work schedule and does not alter the location of work or the total number of hour's workday. According to Christesen (1990), flexible working hours provide employees with some flexibility as to the starting and stopping for their work day, while requiring a core number of hours to be worked within a given time period. The Conference Board of Boston college reports that nearly half of the employees (out of 2000 households surveyed) who were retiring said that more flexible work schedule would make them stay (Fact Sheet Boston college 2008).

'Under a flextime, employees exercise a decision about the time of day they will arrive at and leave from work. The employer/employee creates a band of core time where each employee must be present (normally 9 or 10 a.m. to 2 or 3 p.m.). For example, a flexible schedule where all employees have to be present from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. would have 5 core hours. Employees are allowed to come before the core start time and leave after the core finish time, but there is a limit as to how early the employees can arrive and how late they can leave (e.g., cannot start before 8 a.m. and cannot stay past 10 p.m.). Another important aspect is the degree of carryover that is allowed. Some organizations do not allow any carryover of hours (i.e., the employee must work 8 hours per day), whereas others allow carryover on a weekly basis, and a few organizations even allow monthly carryover'. (Baltes et. al, 1999: p. 497)

According to Peter Berg (2004), work arrangements that reflect employers/employees requirement for greater flexibility, employees' requirement for job security and better balance between work and life responsibility are changing today's organization. Implementation of work arrangements with flextime such as part time, telecommuting, compressed workweeks, weekly hour agreements, banking (taking forward your extra worked hours) has increased since 1990. The standard 40 hours work week is disappearing. In many professions, employees regularly put in extra hour to meet deadlines, which eventually create conflict with family life. Same was emphasized by Golden (2002). This need may be obvious in females as female worker needs more flexible schedule and greater control over work in order to better manage children.

Christopher (1992) found that conflict between work and family role decreases employee's perception of quality of work life and quality of family life which in turn impact organizational

outcomes. They suggest that organizations can mitigate work-family conflicts by offering flexible arrangements. This awareness has given rise to various work arrangements, like maternity leaves, vacation leave and flexible working hours. 'Around the world, managers are becoming more knowledgeable of a changing demographic, cultural, and humanistic need of employees and one way they have reacted is through flexible working hours. In a 1991 study of 188 largest companies in 30 industries 77% reported that they follow flexible working hours.' (Galinsky, 1991: p .16).

Literature (e.g Swart, 1974, Nollen and Martin, 1978) suggests that organizational attendance, and job behavior tend to show a favorable relationship with flexitime, performance results tend to be inconsistent either favorable or neutral, however symptom of stress seem to decline with flexitime. Martin (1999) suggests that quality of life actually decreased in terms of mental health as their sleep duration uncertainty increased. According to Mathieu, gender may also play an important role in determining how perception about quality of life has changed. Females may benefit more than men in solving their work family conflict. "Both genders in flexible organizations reported significantly more variations, independence and ability to learn more skills at work, systolic blood pressure, heart rate and epinephrine levels were more in assembly line than flexible organizations, female showed considerably normal levels under flexible environments". (Bo Melin, 1999: p.47)

To take the argument further, according to Imada (1997) in Japan discussion of flexi time has since the beginning of 1990s has been more focused in terms of what constitute a comfortable lifestyle. Scharlach and Boyd (1989) reported a reasonable percentage of workers were providing help to elderly family members and that formal organizational supportive programs were considered extremely helpful in managing care giving and work responsibility conflicts. Offering of such programs may affect behavior of employees, including commitment and job satisfaction. These decisions may be related to employee loyalty to the organization because the organization is perceived to be a 'family friendly' to work in. 'Reasons cited by organization decision-makers for implementing flexible work hours are to improve motivation and morale and to enable employees to better balance work and family' (Kush and Stroh, 1994). Ultimately this flexibility may relate to improved productivity as well. Osterman (1995) found strong link between the implementation of work-family policies and direct efforts on the part of employers to improve employee commitment. Golden (2005) concluded from his study that workers at times are more interested in changing hours rather than reducing volume of hours. Campagna (1981) highlighted that attendance increased in employees following flexi hours.

Advantages and disadvantages of flexible work hours have been discussed (Christensen and Staines, 1990; Golembewski and Proehl, 1978; Glueck, 1979; Kopelman, 1986; Kush and Stroh, 1994 &1982; Pierce and Newstrom, 1980). Major advantages claimed include decrease in stress, increased job satisfaction and empowerment, reduced slackness and absenteeism, and improved job productivity. Major disadvantages identified include increased costs, problems with work coordination, and difficulties with supervising, and modification in the organizational culture.

3. Flexible Hour and Quality of Life in Pakistan

All of the aforementioned results and findings relate to Western work environments, In Pakistani work place, researchers believe that unique dynamics, cultural bondages and various external variables exist. Highlighting these extraneous variables under Pakistani work place situation would be the major task of the researchers. In the initial, focused group interviews variables which were highlighted by Faculty of IoBM included usage of flexitime in relation to avoidance of law and order situation, rain, engaging in family commitments, late night commitments and giving more time to children.

4. Flexible Hour and Quality of Life at IoBM - Data Analysis

4.1. Gender Based Analysis

Researcher analyzed the data based on perception about quality of life and gender. As highlighted in table 4.1.1(below), test for independence was used to accept or otherwise the first hypothesis that perception about quality of life vis-à-vis flexitime is independent of gender. Analysis showed that 18 out of 21 males had a positive perception towards utility of flexitime as against 10 out of 21 in females, rest 11 respondents had either neutral opinion or few had partial opinion .When test for independence was applied on the data for Null hypothesis, Pearson chi square value of 6.857 was established with .009 significance. Thus Null hypothesis was not accepted and it was assumed that perception about flexitime is dependent on gender with more males favoring flexitime.

Table- 4.1.1
Gender * Perception about Quality of life Crosstabulation

		Perception about Quality of life		
		Positive	Neutral	Total
Gender	Male	18	3	21
	Female	10	11	21
Total		28	14	42

Table - 4.1.2: Test for Independence

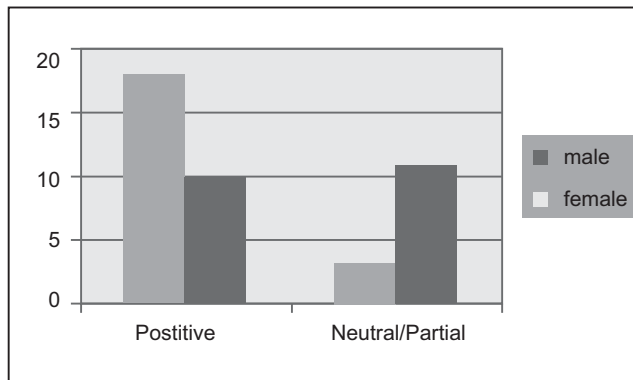
Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.857 ^b	1	.009		
Continuity Correction ^a	5.250	1	.022		
Likelihood Ratio	7.178	1	.007		
Fisher's Exact Test				.020	.010
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.694	1	.010		
N of Valid Cases	42				

a. Computed only for a 2x2 table

b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.00.

Table - 4.1.3: Graphical Presentation



Similarly, when same test was conducted for gender based perception about flexitime and its utility in avoidance of traffic jams test for independence again supported at .000 significant level that males have a stronger inclination towards flexitime, having more utility in avoidance of traffic jams. Females were found to be more neutral. In all, 20 males answered the question in positive and only 1 answered in neutral, where as this ratio was 12 and 9 in the case of females.

Table - 4.1.4: Gender vs. Traffic Problem

Gender * Traffic Problem Crosstabulation

Count		Traffic Problem		Total
		Neutral/Partial	Positive	
Gender	male	1	20	21
	female	12	9	21
Total		13	29	42

Table - 4.1.5: Test of Independence

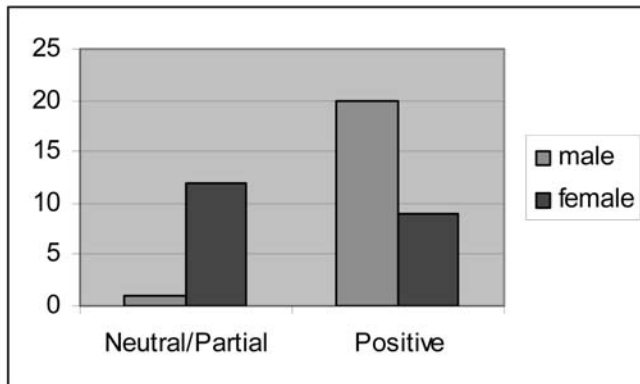
Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.480 ^b	1	.000		
Continuity Correction ^a	11.141	1	.001		
Likelihood Ratio	15.250	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	13.159	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	42				

a. Computed only for a 2x2 table

b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.50.

Table - 4.1.6: Graphical Representation



When the respondents were asked that do they believe that implementation of flexitime has helped them in resolving their family commitments. Response was once again highly in favor of flexitime as 28 out of 39 responded in positive. However as previously response of females was more towards neutral as compared to males, same was supported at significance level of .004

Table - 4.1.7: Gender vs. Family Commitment

Gender * Family Commitments Crosstabulation

Count		Family Commitments		Total
		Neutral/Partial	Positive	
Gender	male	1	17	18
	female	10	11	21
Total		11	28	39

Table - 4.1.8: Test of Independence

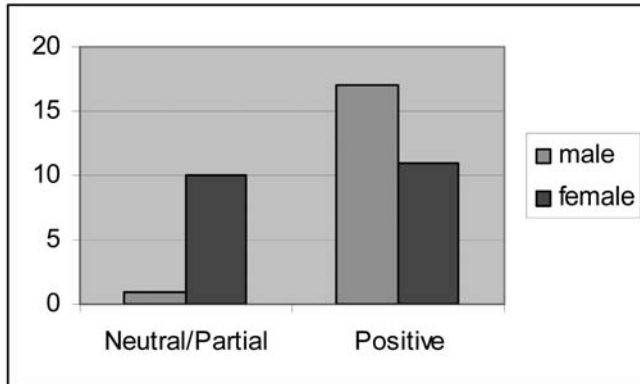
Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.469 ^b	1	.004		
Continuity Correction ^a	6.519	1	.011		
Likelihood Ratio	9.612	1	.002		
Fisher's Exact Test				.005	.004
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.252	1	.004		
N of Valid Cases	39				

a. Computed only for a 2x2 table

b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.08.

Table - 4.1.9: Graphical Representation



4.2. Comparison on the Basis of Family Size

When questions were asked about the overall perception about utility of Flexible timing and results were compared and cross tabulated with family size. Null hypothesis that perception about utility of flexitime is independent of family size, could not be rejected with the significance level of 0.243. However, 16 out of 20 had a positive attitude towards flexi timing as against 12 out of 19 in small families. Overall, 28 out of 39 families supported flexi timing.

Table - 4.2.1:

Family Size Groups * Family Commitments Crosstabulation

Count		Family Commitments		Total
		Neutral/Partial	Positive	
Family Size Groups	Large	4	16	20
	Small	7	12	19
Total		11	28	39

Table - 4.2.2: Test of Independence

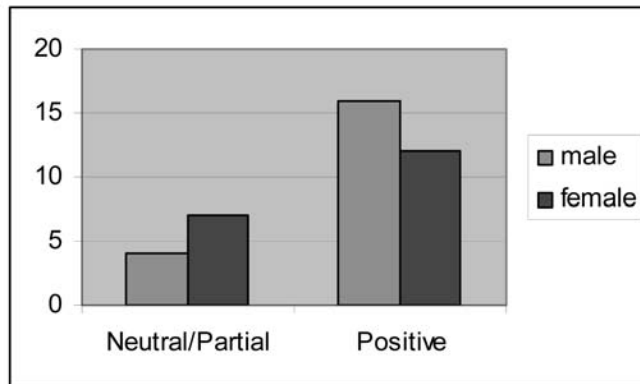
Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.365 ^a	1	.243		
Continuity Correction ^b	.660	1	.417		
Likelihood Ratio	1.376	1	.241		
Fisher's Exact Test				.301	.209
N of Valid Cases	39				

a. Computed only for a 2x2 table

b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.36.

Table - 4.2.3: Graphical Representation



4.3. Perception about Quality of life vs. Marital Status

When the perception about quality of life was analyzed with respect to marital status, the researcher found that married people have more positive perception about improvement of quality of life due to flexi timing implementation. 20 out of 25 had a positive perception as against 8 out of 17 of unmarried people. This perception was also proved by test for independence at significance level of 0.026.

Table - 4.3.1:

Marital Status * Perception about Quality of life Crosstabulation

Count		Perception about Quality of life		Total
		Positive	Neutral/Partial	
Marital Status	Married	20	5	25
	Not Married	8	9	17
Total		28	14	42

Table - 4.3.2: Test of Independence

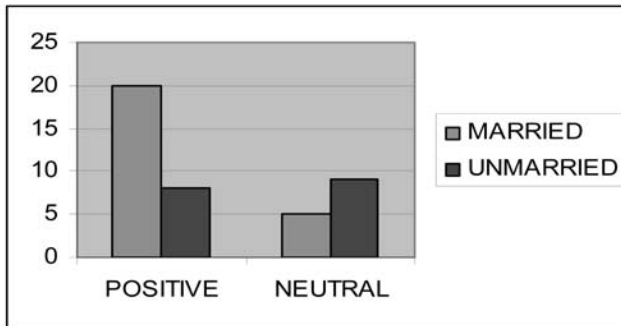
Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.941 ^b	1	.026		
Continuity Correction ^a	3.570	1	.059		
Likelihood Ratio	4.939	1	.026		
Fisher's Exact Test				.045	.030
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.824	1	.028		
N of Valid Cases	42				

a. Computed only for a 2x2 table

b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.67.

Table - 4.3.3: Graphical Representation



4.4. Sleeping Hours vs. Flexi Hours

When respondents were asked whether flexitime has improved their sleeping habits, 78% respondents agreed that flexi timings have improved their sleeping habits. On one sample T test average response on a scale of -3 to +3 came out to be .903 at .004 significant levels.

Table - 4.4.1: Sleeping hours vs Flexi Hours

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Improvement in Sleeping Habits	42	.90	1.923	.297

Table - 4.4.2: One Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Improvement in Sleeping Habits	3.049	41	.004	.905	.31	1.50

4.5. Overall Perception about Improvement in Work Pace Due to Flexitime

Null hypothesis that 50% of employees believed that work place has improved after implementation of flexitime, was rejected at 95% confidence level. And alternate hypothesis that more than 50% favored the notion was accepted.

Calculated $z = -4.375$

Table - 4.5.1: Standard Error

Std. Error of Mean

Missing

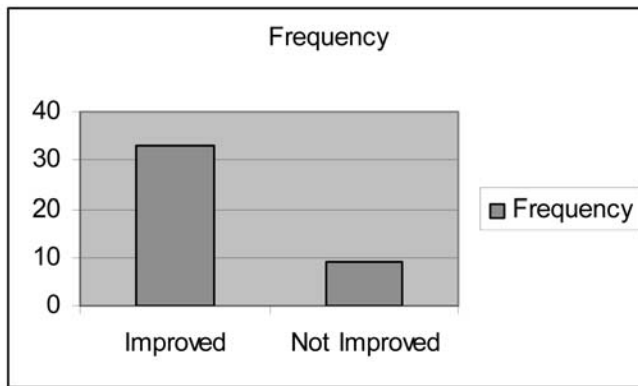
6.41E-02

Table - 4.5.2: Frequency in Work

Overall belief that workplace has improved

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Improved	33	78.6	78.6	78.6
Not Improved	9	21.4	21.4	100.0
Total	42	100.0	100.0	

Table - 4.5.3: Graphical Representation



5. Key Findings

- 1). It was found that flexi timings have induced improvement in work place.
- 2). Factors which have contributed in improvement of work place through flexi timing are: better sleep quality, improved adherence to family commitments, avoidance of traffic jams, and avoidance of other troubled/law and order situations.
- 3). As against previous researches, perception of females was more towards neutral side than males, who were predominantly inclined towards flexi hours. This may be attributed with the life cycle stage of female and male employees. As most of the females under Pakistani environments join a job specifically in business institutes where probably they have taken care of their other commitments, have achieved financial stability or perusing only one job. On the other hand, males at this stage, at times are not only pursuing two jobs but are also liable to cater to other family needs.
- 4). There was no relationship established between family size and preference of flexitime.

- 5). In the context of marital status, the research concludes that married people are more likely to enjoy the facility of flexi timings.

6. Conclusion

As the study was mainly focused on faculty of Business Institutes, researchers tried to establish relationship between gender, marital status, size of the family and perception about quality of life. As evident from key findings that there was a relationship between genders, marital status and perception about quality of life due to flexi work schedules. However, no such relationship could be established between family size and perception about quality of life after implementation of flexible working hours.

Researchers would like to highlight that these relationships might be the result of lifecycle stage of employees and their financial status. For example, as we have seen no relationship was established between family size and perception about quality of life. The reason for the same could be larger family size might be indicator of employee who has achieved greater work experience and is financially sound and has resources to handle personal issues without requiring flexi timings.

7. Recommendations

In the light of aforementioned, following may be recommended:

- Finding of the report may not be considered in isolation. Due consideration may be given to organizational dynamics, unique culture and lifecycle stage of employees.
- To remain competitive, organizations have to start considering flexitime as potent tool for motivation.
- Flexitime may be initiated in consultation with employees keeping the culture flexible for adoption.

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