

CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF MENTAL HEALTH AND FAMILY DISRUPTION AS MEDIATING VARIABLES TO ENHANCE THE ROLE OF TIME FLEXIBILITY ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

The transition to flexible work arrangements during the Covid-19 pandemic has changed employees work dynamics, influencing their well-being, family roles, and job performance. This research investigates the relationship between flextime and employees' performance, through the mediating roles of mental health and family interference with work. Using PLS-SEM approach, data collected from 413 employees in Indonesia working under the flexible work arrangement during the pandemic are analyzed. Results indicated that flextime has a positive effect on mental health and family interference with work. Moreover, enhanced mental health can improve task performance while family interference with work negatively affects task performance. Further, the findings indicate that employee task performance is indirectly influenced by flextime, via the mediation of mental health and family interference with work. Companies may respond to designing flexible work policies balancing employees' personal and work responsibilities, especially in view of the changing post-pandemic environment.

Keywords: flextime, task performance, family interference with work, mental health

A. INTRODUCTION

Numerous studies have examined the influence of flexible work arrangements (FWA) toward family-work dynamics and performance; however, the findings remain incomplete (Solís, 2017). Psychological factor may play a role in it and give better information to their relationship. During the Covid-19 pandemic, various aspects of individual work are impacted such as performance, thus also affecting organizations. Pandemic has triggered a significant shift in how people view work-life balance and personal priorities, such as in the practice of FWA. Work-life flexibility policies have been studied for the last few decades, yet there is a consistent strong growth of interest in it (Allen et al., 2013; Kossek et al., 2023). This is driven by workforce diversity landscape, with evolving job practices such as remote and gig work, as well as external challenges like the Covid-19 pandemic and climate-change disruptions. The transition to undergo FWA during the pandemic has significantly impacted employees' work dynamics, influencing their well-being, family roles, and job performance (Kossek et al., 2023). This shift has led to a complex interplay between mental health, family interference with work, and overall employee productivity.

Among these studies, there is an argument that FWA can contribute directly or indirectly to improvements in individual and/or organizational performance, thus providing a positive impact on business (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; Eshun & Segbenya, 2024; Zappalà et al., 2024). Organization performance is an aggregate of the performance of the work of individual employees (De Cuyper et al., 2020). Conservation of resources (COR) theory suggests that flextime can be a valuable resource that promotes job performance by reducing family-work conflict (Hobfoll, 1989; Zappalà et al., 2024), also through the improvement of mental health.

Recent study by Michael Page consulting (2024) showed that 40% of respondents are working in a hybrid arrangement, while 43% work in the office full-time. Some 24% work in a flexible hybrid arrangement with no set in-office days. Meanwhile, more employees are required to increase their in-office presence as compared to the pandemic period. In Telkom (2022), employees with flexible working arrangements express that they are more or equally productive when undergoing the practice. However, several also highlighted a few detrimental aspects of flexible working, such as the blurring line between family and work life and the potential of working long hours. FWA also help Telkom achieve cost efficiencies from the non-usage of office space which can be significant in the operational cost.

Flextime enables employees to arrange their work schedules to be more flexible, giving them control over working times and potentially enabling a balance between family and work as well as improving job performance (Zappalà et al., 2024). The arrangement of more flexible working hours that differ from the usual working hours may give its own expectations for the role of employees as family members who may be expected to be more responsible in household matters. This has the potential to cause interrole conflict, which arises from the interference of family roles to work (family interference to work / FIW) and interference of work roles to family (work interference to family / WIF) (Allen et al., 2014; Kossek et al., 2023; Makhija, 2003; Reimann & Abendroth, 2022; Zappalà et al., 2024).

FIW is a work demand stressor that triggers stress that can have real consequences for individuals and organizations (Solís, 2017; Soomro et al., 2018). It reflects incompatible demands at work and home, is also associated with its negative impact on employee and organizational performance (Obrenovic et al., 2020; Zappalà et al., 2024). Previous studies found contrary results of the impact direction, where Solís (2017) underlined in teleworking context that teleworkers present a lower FIW than non-teleworkers in low-responsibility levels; meanwhile, with high levels of responsibility, teleworkers show higher FIW.

Focusing on the impact of flextime job arrangement towards performance, this study provide more evidence to explore the relationship of FWA toward work outcome, through psychological and family factor, which is still inconsistent in the previous relevant research finding (Allen et al., 2013; Kossek et al., 2023; Solís, 2017). Mental health has been shown to have a positive influence on employee performance (Agnioletto, 2024; Obrenovic et al., 2020), while negative influence is shown from family interference with work (Karatepe, 2013; Zappalà et al., 2024). To put it simply, happy employees are more likely to be more productive compared to unhappy employees. This research provides empirical findings on employee perspectives on the implementation of FWA and is expected to provide comprehensive empirical and practical contributions.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Task performance or often labeled as job or employee or work performance, refers to the employee's proficiency in carrying out the main job tasks (Greenslade & Jimmieson, 2007; Koopmans et al., 2011; Sverke et al., 2019). Research regarding employee performance mainly refers to task performance. Performance is driven by several factors, including psychological and family (work-life balance) drivers. Employees well-being and work life balance are among the most vital drivers for individuals' performance that relates directly to organizational performance and success.

One of the enhancements of employees' work is through the policies of FWA. FWA is a work arrangement that allows employees to adjust the amount, time, and location of their work (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; Kossek et al., 2023). This arrangement can

include working at times different from standard office working hours referred to flextime or flexitime or compressed working time, as well as options to reduce the time spent working in the office; or working outside the office as often referred to flexplace or telecommuting or remote work or work from home. FWA is widely associated with performance (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; Kelliher & Anderson, 2008), with the emphasis that a clear relationship between the two has not been concluded absolutely.

Emotional conditions can affect employees' performance, with mentally healthy employees tend to experience more positive emotions and fewer negative emotions and could lead to better performance (Kundi et al., 2020; Obrenovic et al., 2020). Mental health encompasses both positive and negative dimensions. The positive aspect reflects individual's psychological well-being and resilience in facing challenges, while negative aspect pertains to experiences of psychological distress and mental disorders (Gnambs & Staufenbiel, 2018; Shiri et al., 2022). Positive mental health plays an important role in supporting and improving employee job performance (Obrenovic et al., 2020; Reimann & Abendroth, 2022; Zappalà et al., 2024). Positive mental health or psychological well-being can enhance employee performance thus contributing to higher organizational performance. Studies have shown that FWA particularly flextime has beneficial impact to employees' mental health and well-being (Reimann & Abendroth, 2022; Subramaniam et al., 2022).

Furthermore, work and life boundaries that accompanies an employee life also contribute to employee performance. The concept of interrole conflict consist of two different but related concepts, namely WIF and FIW (Solís, 2017). Work Interference with Family (WIF) occurs when work interferes with family life, and Family Interference with Work (FIW) occurs when family life interferes with work. FIW through several studies has been shown to have a negative impact on job performance (Gilboa et al., 2008). Primary research focusing on this relationship is growing rapidly, and it is concluded that the resulting impact is that employee's role conflict in work and family is detrimental to employee performance, assessed by individuals and or by superiors. Higher access to flextime and flexplace is also associated with lower WIF and FIW (Allen et al., 2013; Shockley & Allen, 2007). FIW is generally linked to affecting job performance negatively, however, Gilboa et al. (2008) underlines that employees with FIW can also be encouraged to maintain their performance at an acceptable level to be assessed well by superiors.

Based on the above explanation, this study examines the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. Flextime positively influences task performance

Hypothesis 2. Mental health mediates the influence of flextime toward task performance

Hypothesis 3. Family interference with work mediates the influence of flextime toward task performance.

C. METHODS

This study applied cross-sectional approach, using non-probability purposive sampling technique. The respondents are employees who work in the formal sector or legally registered organizations in Indonesia at the time of study. They worked for a minimum of one year and at the time of survey were working in flexible work arrangements (FWA) in terms of work time / flexplace and or in terms of work site / flextime. The survey collected a total of 413 valid responses. Majority of respondents live in the Java Island (90%), followed by Sumatera (4%), Sulawesi (3%), and others (2%). The study was done during the Covid-19 outbreak period, finished within 6 months, with data collection spanning 3 months. Structured questionnaires are distributed online using several networking sites and social media.

Flextime was measured using two items sourced from Hyland (2000) and Shockley & Allen (2014). Mental health was measured using General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) of positive affect which is comprised of six items (Goldberg et al., 1997). Family Interference with Work was measured using instrument from Netemeyer et al. (1996) and Karatepe (2013) with a total of five items. Task performance was measured using self-rated scale of task performance from Williams & Anderson (1991) with a total of 7 items, including 2 reversed items. Responses of the items are recorded using a Likert scale 1-7 from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*), while mental health's items are initiated with the question 'How often do you experience this?' and responses are assessed in frequency scale from 1 (*Never*) to 7 (*Always*).

The hypothesis testing is conducted using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) through software of SmartPLS version 3 (Ringle et al., 2015). PLS-SEM approach is considered suitable in this study, as variable particularly Flextime is still understudied (Hair et al., 2022). PLS-SEM is utilized to evaluate both the measurement and structural model. First, outer model reliability and validity indices for the variables were examined. Second, hypotheses are tested based on the structural model outputs.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Result

Highlights from the profile of respondents are as follows. Based on the total of 413 respondents, the average age is 30 years old. 54% are women, 76% are permanent staff, 90% graduated from bachelor and post-graduate studies, 50% are married with 40% of their spouses are also working or the family is dual earner. Majority of respondents are living in big cities in Indonesia particularly in Java Island, while a small percentage are remote employees hired by global companies around the world. Around 20% of respondents are each living by themselves, with parents, with spouses, and with children (around 1 to 2 kids). In regard to the FWA practices, 54% implement flexplace during pandemic covid-19 with certain degree of flexible working time, 14% implement flextime or flexi-time, while 28% implement both flextime and flexplace. Around 30% of respondents have been implementing FWA within 1-6 years, a few have even gone with the practice for more than 10 years, while majority are just experiencing FWA during the pandemic (78%) with several expressing the company's intent in continuing the practice after pandemic.

Furthermore, 25% of respondents with flextime arrangement implement fixed working hours by determining their beginning and ending working time independently, 10% are in variable working hours, while a small portion work in compressed workweek, flexible shift work, and the rest implement a combination of different working time arrangements. During a week, most respondents still implement FWA 5 workdays, followed by 3, 2, and 4 days a week, while the rest work according to different instructions from the company, or work very flexibly. 18% of respondents work in government organizations, 14% in education, while the rest work in various sectors such as banking & finance, telecommunications, trading, oil & gas, technology, and so on.

Table 1: Means, standard deviations, and correlations of variables

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev	1	2	3	4
1. Flextime	4.162	1.980				
2. Mental Health	5.369	1.450	0.160			
3. Family Interference with Work	2.984	1.763	0.089	-0.364		
4. Task Performance	5.748	1.343	0.077	0.613	-0.410	

N = 413. Correlations are significant at 0.1 level.

Table 2: Measure of Variable Items, Validity, and Reliability

Variable	Item	Code	Loadings	CR	AVE
Flexitime	I have the freedom to vary my work schedule	TIME1	0.929	0.939	0.885
	I can change the start and end schedule of my work according to my preferences and needs	TIME2	0.952		
Mental Health	Able to concentrate	MH1	0.734	0.874	0.537
	Playing a useful part	MH2	0.648		
	Capable of making decisions	MH3	0.727		
	Able to enjoy day-to-day activities	MH4	0.720		
	Able to face problems	MH5	0.819		
	Feeling reasonably happy	MH6	0.739		
Family Interference with Work	The demands of my family or spouse/partner interfere with work-related activities	FIW1	0.882	0.949	0.788
	I have to put off doing things at work because of demands on my time at home	FIW2	0.820		
	Things I want to do at work don't get done because of the demands of my family or spouse/partner.	FIW3	0.936		
	My home life interferes with my responsibilities at work such as getting to work on time, accomplishing daily tasks, and working overtime	FIW4	0.907		
	Family-related strain interferes with my ability to perform job-related duties	FIW5	0.889		
Task Performance	Adequately completes assigned duties	PERF1	0.863	0.896	0.564
	I fulfill responsibilities specified in job description	PERF2	0.867		
	I perform tasks that are expected of me	PERF3	0.879		
	I meet formal performance requirements of the job	PERF4	0.885		
	I am Engaged in activities that will directly affect performance evaluation	PERF5	0.639		
	I neglect aspects of the job I am obligated to perform	PERF6	0.435		
	I fail to perform essential duties	PERF7	0.550		

As shown in Table 2 (two), it was found that respondents have moderate flexibility in managing their own work schedule, experience quite low family interference with work, and score highly in task performance as well as mental health. Based on Figure 1, it can be observed that the factor loadings of items examined score higher than the recommended value of minimum 0.7 for majority of items. It shows that the items are performing well in reflecting their respective variable. However, there are several items with outer loadings of <0.7 that were still analyzed, particularly item PERF5-7, based on the consideration they did not affect the reliability of the variable (Hair et al., 2022; Garson, 2016), and their involvement in the measures reflect the Task Performance more comprehensively. Further, the lower loadings might be due to the nature of reversed item of item 6 and 7 that usually result in lower loadings (García-Cabrera et al., 2018).

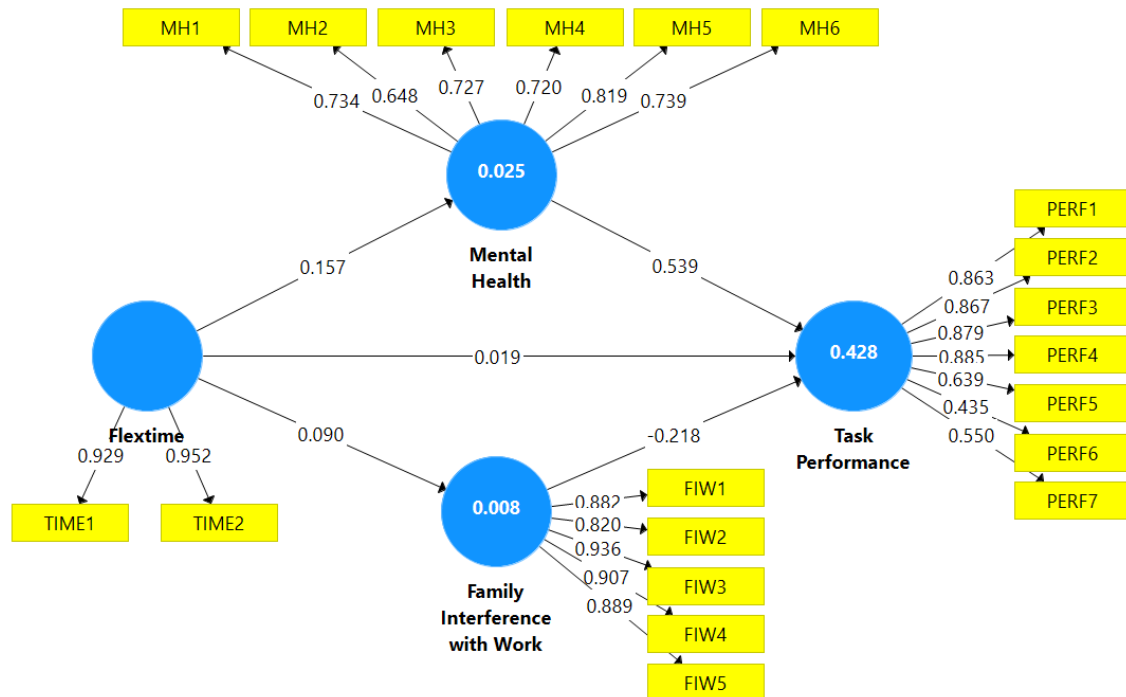


Figure 1. Structural Research Model

The structural path model in Figure 1 depicts the relationship between variables as hypothesized. It shows that Task performance is positively influenced by flextime via the mediating role of Mental health ($\beta = 0.085$, T-value = 2.99) and Family interference with work (FIW) ($\beta = -0.02$, T-value = 1.693), albeit small in significance. This provides support for Hypothesis 2 and 3.

R-square of Task Performance is 0.428 in the model. This indicates that the Task Performance is explained by other variables in the model for more than 42%, which is categorized as moderate impact. About effect size, f^2 result shows <0.15 indicates a small effect of Flextime and FIW toward Task Performance, while large effect was indicated from Mental Health with f^2 of 0.419. Furthermore, the Q^2 predicts indicator is used to assess the predictive performance of the structural model. The results show predictive relevance albeit small.

2. Discussion

Flextime was found to have no direct influence toward task performance, relevant with Zappalà et al. (2024), thus Hypothesis 1 is not supported. Further, the relationship was bridged through the mediation variables of mental health supporting Hypothesis 2 (Kundi et al., 2020; Obrenovic et al., 2020; Reimann & Abendroth, 2022) and family interference with work, thus supporting Hypothesis 3 (Soomro et al., 2018; Zappalà et al., 2024). Flextime's influence on FIW also does not have quite a strong impact. Level of employee responsibility in work may have a role in this, where higher responsibility may trigger stronger impact toward FIW (Solís, 2017). Meanwhile, flextime has rather higher influence toward mental health. This underlines that perception on flexibility in work time affects more on the personal boundary, and less toward boundary outside the individual. Both mental health and FIW plays as a full mediation between flextime and task performance, where perception on flexible arrangement on work time do not affect performance directly, rather via flextime and FIW.

This findings have corroborated the framework of COR theory which highlights how employees in flexible work arrangement strive to maintain their performance by ensuring their mental well-being and manage stressor in the form of family interference with work (Eshun & Segbenya, 2024; Zappalà et al., 2024). Implications that can be drawn from this study is that in the context of workers undergoing FWA during pandemic Covid-19 in Indonesia, flextime affects employees' task performance through the positive mediating role of mental health, meaning that enhancement of mental health can improve the influence of flexibility in managing work time toward performance. Furthermore, flextime might cause interference or spillovers from family toward work, thus affecting performance negatively.

In specifics, mediation effect of mental health is a positive stream where both the practice of flextime and mental health enhances employees' task performance. Mental health in most cases cannot be discerned easily. However, its issues may even cause physical problems if not managed carefully (Reimann & Abendroth, 2022; Subramaniam et al., 2022). Meanwhile, the mediating role of family interference with work shows a negative thread to performance, implying that organization should pay attention to reducing the impact of family life hindering work which might be detrimental to performance. Organizations should implement policies to improve mental health and promote family stability so as not to influence performance negatively, such as implementing psychological wellness programs, offering personal and family benefits, and so on.

E. CONCLUSION

Organizations adapt to changing economic and social conditions including the implementation of FWA. Flextime, one of the main approaches to FWA, has been practiced from a long time ago and especially during the course of the Covid-19 pandemic. Eventually organizations and employees are adapting with the new normal working arrangement, and it shows flextime that it has positive influence toward job performance, through the mediating role of mental health and family interference with work. Thus, organizations need to bridge the need of a certain degree of employee work flexibility to promote optimum performance by enhancing positive mental health and work life balance.

Based on this study findings, managers need to understand how to manage suitable FWA practices for driving employees' performance, by enhancing mental health and work-life balance. A certain degree of freedom for employees to manage working hours can result in particularly positive job performance. This needs support from the management, effective communication & supervisory mechanism, and trust, to name a few.

This study has several limitations. Research variables in this study are measured using a self-report survey by individual employee, which may cause common method bias, particularly in measuring task performance. Future research may also involve supervisor-rated employee performance or collect related data at different time points. Further, data analyzed in this study is collected during Covid-19 pandemic, thus showing high implementation of FWA where its practices in the organizations might be different post-pandemic. Longitudinal study might help in following up the research study and future research should consider collecting data outside crisis period showing the usual work practices. Comparative study might also help to uncover the difference of respondents' perception between different time points and circumstances. Related topics of interest to be studied in the future can involve more varieties of FWA practices thus enriching the knowledge in this particular field, which is getting more widely implemented.

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