The Impact of Flexibility and Work-Life Balance on Employee Productivity and Well-being in IT

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Abstract

This paper quantitatively estimates the effect of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) on productivity and well- being with reference to 267 Indian IT professionals. The main goal is to determine which of the two concepts perceived productivity efficacy or work-life balance (WLB) satisfaction is the more influential concept in psychological terms in order to establish which concept is the strongest predictor of mental well-being among employees at work in flexible working conditions. The results provided after the analysis based on cross- sectional survey and multiple linear regression allow concluding that workers in flexible work schemes are much more satisfied with WLB compared to those working on-site, though WLB is not a strong predictor of well-being. Rather, perceived productivity benefit becomes the only important positive predictor of employee well-being. On-site, hybrid, and remote models do not present a significant difference in terms of productivity perceptions, whereas the hybrid model can help significantly lower social isolation as opposed to complete remote work. The findings indicate that companies ought to focus on productive autonomy that requires the connection of flexibility and performance efficacy and not to count solely on the expansive WLB programs in maintaining long-term well-being and performance.

Keywords

Flexible workings; Perceived productivity gain; Work-life balance contentment; Worker welfare; Hybrid work framework; Indian IT workers.

1. Introduction

The Indian IT industry has seen flexible work arrangements (FWAs) substituting the old office norms and enhancing autonomy and decreasing work-life conflict, at a cost of introducing the problem of boundary blurring and social isolation. The study will fill the gap in the knowledge of well-being mechanisms by contrasting perceived productivity efficacy with work-life balance (WLB) satisfaction. Results demonstrate the efficacy, which is based on high performance, to be more effective than WLB in predicting well-being. The research study is based on the competitive Indian IT industry, through T- tests, ANOVA, and multiple regression test to prove five propositions. It requires the investment of organisations in environments that facilitate Productive Autonomy to guarantee long term performance and reality of the health of employees.

1.1 Need for the Research

Flexible work needs empirical data to design the policy optimally to be normalised during the post- pandemic phase. This research paper will identify the exact psychological process in which flexibility can affect employee mental health by identifying which more accurately reflects wellbeing between perceived efficacy (Productivity Benefits) or Work-Life Balance (WLB) satisfaction. It is imperative to find this significant driver to the sustainability of an organization.

1.2 Scope of the Study

The study has a cross-sectional quantitative research grounded on 267 IT professionals in India. It merely looks into the relationship of the specific work models (remote, hybrid, on-site), the satisfaction of the staff, perceived productivity and work-life balance. The obtained results are based on self-reported survey data and on the statistical inference (ANOVA and Regression) and give the insights into the current employee perception in the industry.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 International Journal of Management Research: PRISMA systematic review Sharma et al. (2023) reported an increase in WLB in response to flexible schedules and social support in Indian IT professionals, yet the burnout/technostress remained. Requested longitudinal research and psychological empowerment interventions.

2.2 This paper, Kumar and Patel (2018), Asian Journal of Management: Survey of 345 NCR IT employees established a positive relationship between flexible work and productivity and satisfaction, which will help retain employees. Prescribed stress management in industry.

2.3 Reddy and Singh (2024), Journal of Indian Business Studies: 106 Survey of IT workers associated WLB with greater engagement/performance. Active leadership that is stressed but not policy making.

2.4 International Journal of Management Science: SEM analysis of Indonesian SME employee 400 employees proves WLB improves performance/satisfaction (Susanto et al., 2022). Recommended Hr/mediator studies on specific Hr strategies.

2.5 Sharma and Desai (2020), Journal of Employee Relations: Correlation study of 345 Indian IT workers linked WLB practices with satisfaction/retention. Solicitous demographic examination and intervention reviews.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Data Collection

3.1.1 Research Approach: Quantitative, Cross-Sectional Design

The research followed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, which enables the statistical measurement of the relationship, the possibility to verify a hypothesis, compare (e.g., remote vs. hybrid), and correlate the data at one point in time. This will give a picture of how IT workers feel at the present moment.

3.1.2 Target Population, Sampling, and Size

It targeted Indian IT specialists who depend on the flexible work models. The selection of the participants was done based on the work model (remote, hybrid, on-site) in purposive sampling to ensure the representation of the group. There were 267 valid responses that gave adequate power in ensuring generalizability of the industry.

3.1.3 Data Collection Instrument and Analysis Software

The data were collected through a structured online questionnaire by using validated 5-point Likert scale to compute the score of WLB, Productivity Benefit and Well-Being. Data was cleaned and analyzed using SPSS.

3.2 Statistical Tools Employed

3.2.1 Descriptive statistics: These are used to give a basic understanding of the sample by analyzing all demographic data and basic question distributions (the pie charts) in advance.

3.2.2 One-way ANOVA and independent samples T-tests: Used for hypotheses (H1, H2, H4, H5) that require comparing the means of different groups (e.g., comparing WLB scores between flexible and on-site workers or productivity scores across three models).

3.2.3 Pearson correlation: This method is used to precisely determine the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two variables, such as the one between employee guilt and WLB satisfaction (H3).

3.2.4 Multiple Linear Regression: This essential tool was used to build the final predictive model by separating the unique predictive power of the two main independent variables (WLB Score and Productivity Benefit Score) on the dependent variable (Well-being Score).

3.3 Objectives of the Study

- To evaluate the perceptions of productivity in on-site, hybrid, and remote work models (H1).
- To Measure the Improvement in Work-Life Balance Contentment Offered by Flexible Work (H2).
- To evaluate the psychological relationship between overall WLB satisfaction and guilt (H3).
- To Compare Remote and Hybrid Workers' Risks of Social Isolation and Distraction (H4).
- To ascertain whether gender significantly affects the WLB improvement from flexibility (H5).

- To Establish Whether WLB Satisfaction or Perceived Productivity is the Stronger, Independent Predictor of Employee Mental Well-being.

3.4 Hypothesis

H1 (Productivity Efficacy): When compared to the on-site work model, flexible work models (remote and hybrid) are positively connected with noticeably higher perceived productivity effectiveness.

H2 (Well-being Dividend): Compared to employees who only work on-site, those who use flexible work arrangements (remote or hybrid) will report much higher Work-Life Balance Satisfaction scores.

H3 (Psychological Friction): The frequency of guilt when putting personal obligations first and overall WLB satisfaction are significantly correlated negatively.

H4 (Isolation and Distraction): When compared to the hybrid model, the remote work model will show noticeably greater reported rates of social isolation and distractions.

H5 (Gendered Impact): Female employees will perceive a much greater improvement in work-life balance as a result of flexible work arrangements than their male counterparts.

4. Analysing and interpreting data

4.1 Demographic Distribution

4.1.2 Work model

The distribution of respondents across different work models shows that 129 participants (48.30%) follow a hybrid work arrangement. Additionally, 98 respondents (36.70%) work remotely, while 40 participants (15.00%) are engaged in a fully on-site work model. This indicates that hybrid work is the most prevalent format among the surveyed population.

4.1.3 Gender

The gender composition of the sample reveals that 158 respondents (59.20%) identify as male, whereas 107 participants (40.10%) identify as female. A small proportion of the sample, comprising 2 respondents (0.70%), identifies as belonging to other gender categories. This distribution reflects a male-dominant response pattern within the dataset.

4.1.4 Age Group

The age distribution indicates that the largest group of respondents, 114 participants (42.70%), falls within the 25–34-year age range. This is followed by 74 respondents (27.70%) in the 35– 44-year category. Individuals aged below 25 years account for 44 participants (16.50%), while 29 respondents (10.90%) are between 45 and 54 years of age. The smallest group consists of 6 participants (2.20%) who are aged 55 years and above. Overall, the sample is predominantly composed of younger working-age individuals.

4.2 Questionnaire Analysis (Q1 - Q13)

How do you rate the balance between your work and personal life? (1=Very Poor, 2=Poor, 3=Average, 4=Good, 5=Excellent)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
4	126	47.20%
3	77	28.80%
5	39	14.60%
2	22	8.20%
1	3	1.10%

Source: Authors analysis

Table : 4.2.1

The table indicates positive WLB ratings (47.2% Good, 14.6% Excellent; 61.8% positive), with 9.3% Poor/Very Poor, which implies that good flexibility policies with respect to employee balance perception.

4.2.2 How satisfied are you with your current work-life balance? (1=Very unsatisfied, 2= Unsatisfied, 3= Neutral, 4=Satisfied, 5=Extremely satisfied)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
4	122	45.70%
3	75	28.10%
5	49	18.40%
2	19	7.10%
1	2	0.70%

Source: Authors analysis

Table : 4.2.2

The table demonstrates a high level of WLB satisfaction (45.7% Satisfied, 18.4% Very Satisfied; 64.1% positive), which means that the work environment does not fail to meet the expectations of employees, in terms of personal-professional balance.

4.2.3 How much has flexibility improved your work-life balance? (1=Not at all, 2=A little, 3= Somewhat, 4=Quite a lot, 5=Very Much)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
4	93	34.80%
3	86	32.20%
5	57	21.30%
2	28	10.50%
1	3	1.10%

Source: Authors analysis

Table : 4.2.3

The table shows flexibility strongly enhances WLB (56.1% rated 4-5; 34.8% at 4), with only 1.1% reporting no benefit, confirming IT flexible arrangements effectively achieve WLB objectives.

4.2.4 How often do you feel guilty when you prioritize personal commitments over work? (1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
3	87	32.60%
4	74	27.70%
2	56	21.00%
5	35	13.10%
1	15	5.60%

Source: Authors analysis

Table : 4.2.4

The table reveals guilt linked to setting boundaries, with 32.6% neutral and 40.8% often or always feeling guilty prioritizing personal time, while only 5.6% never feel guilt, highlighting psychological friction in flexible work-life boundaries.

4.2.5 How effective do you find flexible working hours in enhancing your productivity? (1=Not effective, 2=Slightly effective, 3=Moderately effective, 4=Very effective, 5=Extremely effective)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
4	118	44.20%
3	81	30.30%
5	45	16.90%
2	20	7.50%

1	3	1.10%

Source: Authors analysis
Table : 4.2.5

The table shows strong belief in flexible hours boosting productivity (61.1% rated 4-5 effective; 44.2% at 4), enabling peak-time work alignment for key regression input.

4.2.6 Do you feel more motivated to perform well when working under flexible conditions?
(1=Never, 2= Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
4	100	37.50%
3	83	31.10%
5	60	22.50%
2	22	8.20%
1	2	0.70%

Source: Authors analysis
Table : 4.2.6

The table shows flexible conditions boost motivation (60% rated 4-5 agree; 37.5% at 4), supporting psychological theory that job control enhances intrinsic drive for better performance.

4.2.7 How often do you face distractions while working remotely or flexibly? (1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
3	114	42.70%
4	69	25.80%
2	47	17.60%
5	24	9.00%
1	13	4.90%

Source: Authors analysis
Table : 4.2.7

The table shows moderate distractions (42.7% neutral; 34.8% often/always), establishing baseline data for H4 to compare remote vs. hybrid focus challenges.

4.2.8 How often does flexible work cause delays in project coordination? (1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
3	103	38.60%
2	68	25.50%
4	55	20.60%
5	23	8.60%
1	18	6.70%

Source: Authors analysis
Table : 4.2.8

The table presents the results that flexible work hardly leads to the coordination delays (38.6% neutral; only 29.2% often/always) which proves the IT tools as efficient to fill the gaps in distance and time.

4.2.9 Do you agree that lack of supervision during flexible work reduces your accountability? (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
3	76	28.50%
5	63	23.60%
4	60	22.50%
2	51	19.10%
1	17	6.40%

Source: Authors analysis
Table : 4.2.9

Opinions on accountability under flexibility are sharply divided. A significant 46.1% of workers agree or strongly agree (4 or 5) they are less accountable when there is less supervision, while 28.5% are neutral and 25.5% disagree or strongly disagree. This indicates persistent trust issues and the need for clear, output-based accountability metrics to replace physical presence.

4.2.10 How often have flexible work options reduced the number of sick days or absenteeism for you? (1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
4	93	34.80%
3	82	30.70%
5	45	16.90%
2	37	13.90%
1	10	3.70%

Source: Authors analysis
Table : 4.2.10

Flexibility significantly reduces absenteeism, with 51.7% of workers agreeing it frequently or always lowers sick days. This is likely because employees can work while slightly ill or manage personal emergencies without taking full days off, making flexible work an effective strategy to minimize lost hours.

4.2.11 How often do you experience stress related to work demands? (1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Alway s)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
3	81	30.30%
4	74	27.70%
5	55	20.60%
2	44	16.50%
1	13	4.90%

Source: Authors analysis
Table : 4.2.11

The table shows that despite flexible work's WLB benefits, 48.3% often or always experience stress, with 30.3% neutral. This indicates workload pressures remain high, highlighting the need for demand management alongside scheduling to support well-being.

4.2.12 Do you feel that flexible working has improved your mental well-being? (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
4	88	33.00%
3	80	30.00%
5	60	22.50%
2	34	12.70%
1	5	1.90%

Source: Authors analysis
Table : 4.2.12

According to the table, 55.5% agree that flexibility enhanced mental health (4-5 ratings) with 30% neutral, a major contribution to the well-being analysis, as autonomy and lesser commuting stress are the main input factors.

4.2.13 How often do you feel socially isolated while working remotely or flexibly? (1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
3	92	34.50%
4	68	25.50%
2	55	20.60%
5	32	12.00%
1	20	7.50%

Source: Authors analysis
Table : 4.2.13

The table demonstrates social isolation as a shared flexible work problem (34.5% neutral; 37.5% often/always), which gives H4 a point of variation to prove whether hybrid models decrease it compared to fully remote.

5. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis No	Hypothesis Statement	Test Used	Key Test Statistic	p- value	Decision	Conclusion
H1 (Productivity Efficacy)	Flexible models lead to significantly higher perceived productivity than On-site work.	One-way ANOVA	F=0.125	0.882	Retain H0 (Null Hypothesis)	NOT SUPPORTED: All three work models (Remote, Hybrid, On-site) showed equal perceived productivity.
H2 (Well-being Dividend)	Flexible workers report significantly higher Work-Life Balance Satisfaction than On-site workers.	Independen t T-test	t=3.056	0.003	Reject H0	SUPPORTED: Flexibility is proven to deliver a statistically significant and higher WLB satisfaction.

H3 (Psychologic al Friction)	Guilt correlates negatively with overall WLB Satisfaction.	Pearson Correlation	r=+0.185	0.002	Reject H0	CONTRADICTE D: A significant positive correlation was found, suggesting guilt is linked to actively successful boundary management.
H4 (Isolation)	Remote workers show significantly higher Social Isolation than Hybrid workers.	Independen t T-test	t=2.184	0.029	Reject H0	PARTIALLY SUPPORTED: Hybrid significantly reduces social isolation risk compared to Remote.
H4 (Distraction)	Remote workers show significantly higher Distractions than Hybrid workers.	Independen t T-test	t=−1.332	0.183	Retain H0	NOT SUPPORTED: Distractions were similar across both models, suggesting it is a personal issue, not a work model issue.
H5 (Gendered Impact)	Female employees report greater WLB improvement than male employees.	Independen t T-test	t=−1.237	0.217	Retain H0	NOT SUPPORTED: The WLB benefit of flexibility is perceived equally by both male and female employees.

Source: Authors analysis

Initial hypothesis testing reveals flexible policies significantly boost Work-Life Balance satisfaction vs. on-site work (H2 supported, p = 0.003). No significant productivity differences exist across On-site, Hybrid, and Remote models (H1 not supported, p = 0.882), indicating flexibility doesn't inherently improve performance. The Hybrid model reduces social isolation risk compared to fully remote (H4 partially supported, p = 0.029). A striking "Guilt Paradox" emerged (H3 contradicted, p = 0.002): higher guilt correlates with better WLB, suggesting guilt reflects effective boundary-setting ability.

6. Core Predictive Analysis: The Driver of Employee Well-being

This table shows the final outcome of the Multiple Linear Regression model that examined independent predictive capability of WLB and Productivity to Mental Well-Being.

Predictor Variable	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision (Support/Reject H0)	Role in Well-being
Work-Life Balance Satisfaction Score	0.091	1.421	0.156	Retain H0	Not an Independent Predictor
Perceived Productivity Benefit Score	0.315	5.118	<0.001	Reject H0	Primary, Strong Predictor

Source: Authors analysis

The multiple linear regression ensures that the only significant predictor of well-being was the Perceived Productivity Benefit Score ($p<0.001$, 8) because of performance efficacy which was possible through flexibility. The contribution of the Work-Life Balance Satisfaction was not substantial ($p=0.156$) and it demonstrated that it was not the key driver in mental health. WLB is a source of simple stress management, but the actual psychological rewards are generated in Productive Autonomy high performance with flexible freedom.

7. Key Findings

1. **Stress is High:** Despite the good WLB, 48.3% of workers say they frequently or always experience stress at work, demonstrating that flexibility by itself cannot address high workload demands.

2. **Mental Health Boost:** 55.5% of workers concur that flexible work arrangements have enhanced their mental health, demonstrating the direct positive impact of flexibility on emotional health.

3. **Absenteeism is Down:** Because 51.7% of workers said that having flexible options decreased the number of sick days or instances of absenteeism they had to take, flexibility saves businesses time.

4. **Motivation is High:** Sixty percent of workers say they feel more motivated to perform well in flexible work environments, demonstrating that these conditions effectively increase internal drive.

5. **Accountability Concerns:** Nearly half of the workers, 46.1%, concur that their sense of personal accountability during flexible work is diminished by the absence of direct, physical supervision.

6. **Guilt and Distraction Rates:** For 34.8% of the flexible workforce, distractions are a constant problem that they encounter frequently or always. Furthermore, the study discovered that 40.8% of employees who say they feel bad about setting limits actually have higher WLB scores.

8. Areas of Improvement

1. **Performance Focus (Productive Autonomy**): Efficacy over time-off; get train managers to believe that staff can deliver results-based outcomes.

2. **Workload Control:** Manage 48.3% chronic stress through the distribution of resources and feasible deadlines in spite of flexibility.

3. **Results-Based Accountability:** To earn trust, substitute presence measures with output- based assessments (46.1% accountability issues).

4. **Hybrid Model Standard:** Be default to hybrid to minimize the isolation of the remote and maintain collaboration.

5. **Boundary Training:** Normalize effective boundaries with self-scheduling and distraction management training (34.8% rate).

9. Conclusion

The study of 267 IT professionals shows that flexible work arrangements (FWAs) strongly improve work-life balance, with 61.8 percent giving a positive response. However, flexibility alone does not enhance perceived productivity, and well-being was more closely linked to productive autonomy—the ability to control one's work—than to work-life balance satisfaction. Stress levels remain high at 48.3 percent, highlighting the need for better workload and schedule management. The hybrid model emerges as the most effective approach, reducing risks of social isolation and absenteeism (51.7%). To address accountability concerns (46.1%) and support long-term performance and psychological well-being, organizations must strengthen strategic alignment and adopt clear, metric-based accountability practices.

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