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FLEXIBLE WORK OPTIONS WITHIN THE ORGANISATIONAL SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

The availability of flexible work options provides an opportunity for individuals to shape their careers in order to optimise their work and life goals. This study takes a systems theory approach to examine how the use of flexible work options influences relationships and interactions in the workplace. The Flexible Work Options Questionnaire (Albion, 2004) and the Voice Climate Survey (Langford, 2002) were administered online to 108 employees (70 females, 38 males) from a chartered accounting firm in Australia. Results suggest positive outcomes for organisations, providing support for the use of flexible work options by those wanting to make career choices that balance the demands of work and non-work roles.

FLEXIBLE WORK OPTIONS WITHIN THE ORGANISATIONAL SYSTEM

Current career theory uses a holistic approach in defining work and career-based decisions, recognising that “quality of life is equally as important as standard of living” (Feller, 2003). This approach requires a new set of competencies of people engaged in the world of work, among them being the ability to understand the link between work and non-work life, and the ability to accommodate, integrate, and balance the demands of each. As a means of attaining this balance, flexible work options such as flexible work schedules, job sharing, part-time work, phased retirement, and home-based work have become routine entitlements in many organisations (Avery & Zabel, 2001).

Apart from caring for children, working men and women have a variety of demands on their time and energy, such as caring for elderly parents, a commitment to personal development and education, or community work (Kropf, 1999). A multi-role approach is essential in trying to understand and facilitate people’s engagement with work. Super (1963) was one of the first theorists to present a developmental, multi-role approach to career development and worklife. He described an individual’s life as a multi-dimensional experience, which he represented as a rainbow (Super, 1980), with some roles being enacted consecutively and others simultaneously within the life spectrum. The roles that Super defined were child, student, leisurite, citizen, worker, and homemaker.

Super’s holistic life-span, life-space approach to work and life has been incorporated into current career counselling practice in terms of integrative life planning, which looks at connections between family and work life, and of constructivism, which focuses on the individual’s contextualised experience (Goodman, 2006). The holistic approach was also used by Patton and McMahon (1997; 1999) who proposed a systems based theory of career and life development. They noted the importance of focusing on the individual, whom they placed at the centre of a series of concentric circles, representing the many layers of influence on a person’s career decision-making. This representation of interacting forces enables us to focus on the changing relationships among the various components of the system, as suggested by Burnham (1986). The current study uses systems theory to study the way in which many workers use flexibility in their working arrangements to better manage the complexity of their life roles.

Workplace flexibility

The importance of work-life balance has been well documented. In a study by the Families and Work Institute, respondents ranked work-life balance among the most important factors in accepting a new position (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1999). Technological developments such as laptop computers, the internet, and mobile phones have transformed the space and time dimensions of work, facilitating a variety of flexible working arrangements. These workplace changes have been designed not only to meet employees' emerging needs but also represent practical organisational responses to globalisation and skills shortages. Indeed, flexible work options have become important recruitment and retention strategies for many organisations (Almer & Kaplan, 2002; Kerslake, 2002).

Most research has indicated favourable outcomes for individuals who have access to flexible work options. Scandura and Lankau (1997) found that specific work hour programs, regardless of whether or not they were used, were significantly related to organisational commitment and job satisfaction of female managers. Other studies have found associations between the use of flexible work options and greater job satisfaction and reduced absenteeism (Galinsky & Stein, 1990; Lee, 1991; Thierry & Jansen, 1998), reduced stress (Perlow, 1997), and increased job autonomy and job enrichment (Avery & Zabel, 2001).

Despite the perceived advantages of flexible work options and moves to extend their availability, many employees, particularly men, have been slow to take up these options even when they are readily available within their suite of employee entitlements (Polach, 2003; Thornthwaite, 2002). This may be related to the fact that employers are often more accepting of working mothers taking time off for their children than they are for working fathers, whose absence would more likely be perceived as a lack of commitment (Pasashar, 2003).

It is the interface between the individual's personal systems and the system of the organisation in which they are employed that determines whether or not flexible work options will be adopted. Even when life circumstances may indicate the need for workplace flexibility, employees may be deterred from taking them up if there is no support for their use within the organisational system. Organisations of the 20th century were largely based on a model of a work/home dichotomy, where non-work responsibilities

were not seen as legitimate workplace concerns, and while the ethos of many workplaces is changing, remnants of the former culture persist. Barriers in the workplace may be lack of supervisory support for flexible work options, concerns about perceived lack of commitment and adverse career impact, and consideration for clients (Allen, 2001; Almer, Cohen, & Single, 2003). Other difficulties associated with arrangements such as part-time work are problems such as missing training, and not keeping up with changes at work (Higgins, Duxbury, & Johnson, 2000).

However, Albion (2004) found that not all perceived barriers were significant predictors of flexible work option usage. It appears that while employees acknowledged possible negative outcomes associated with flexible work practices, many who were parents and carers chose to accept those outcomes as a compromise, or balance choice, in order to meet their family commitments. Similar compromises may also be made by those seeking a broader work/life balance, and who are seeking choices to enable them to make meaning out of their lives (Feller, 2006; Goodman, 2006). Practices and relationships within the organisational system need to be renegotiated when standard patterns of work attendance vary.

The current study

This study looks at the relationships between the use of flexible work options and organisational climate, with an examination of how workplace flexibility impacts on the broader system of the organisation. Angyal (1969) noted that the system refers to the organisation and the interrelationships among the constituents rather than to the constituents themselves. Therefore, when we look at the individual within the overall context of the organisation, we move from a focus on the needs and behaviours of the individual, to a focus on how those needs and behaviours interact with the needs and behaviours of the other parts of the system – the other workers, the work environment, management policy and style, and so on. If balance is achieved for the individuals within the system, it is likely that such balance will also be reflected in the system of the organisation.

The study was conducted with a large international public accounting firm and looked at the usage patterns and purposes of the various types of flexible work options available to their staff. The aims of the

study were to inform current career management practice by (a) examining the usage pattern of flexible work options; (b) ascertaining relationships among the usage of and attitudes to flexible work options, marker variables indicating work/life balance, and work climate variables associated with interrelations and interactions within the workplace; and (c) ascertaining relationships among the usage of and attitudes to flexible work options, marker variables indicating work/life balance, and organisational outcome variables of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, wellness, and intention to leave.

Based on the findings of previous research, it was hypothesised that flexible work options were more likely to be used by female employees, those who were younger, and/or those with high levels of non-work commitments, such as family, study, sport, or community roles. From a systems theory perspective, it was further hypothesised that there would be positive relationships among work/life balance marker variables and measures reflecting relationships and interactions within the workplace, and that the use of and attitudes to flexible work options would be positively associated with relationship and interaction variables, and with positive organisational climate outcomes.

METHOD

Participants

The survey was conducted online with 170 employees from four regional offices of a chartered accounting firm. One hundred and eight responses were received (70 females, 38 males), giving a response rate of 63.8%. Approximately half (46.3%) were aged between 21 and 30 years, while 40.8% were aged between 31 and 50 years. The average tenure of respondents was quite short, with 43.5% having been with the organisation for less than two years; 34.3% having worked in the organisation between three and five years; and only 22.2% having been with the organisation for more than five years. Women had shorter tenure than men, with 53% of women being with the organisation for less than two years, compared to 26% of men. One hundred and two employees were employed full-time, with six in part-time positions. There were 13% who worked an average of 15 to 35 hours per week, 75.9% who worked between 37.5 and 45 hours per week, while 11.1% indicated that they worked between 46 and 80 hours per week.

Thirty-one employees had responsibility for the care of children, with nine of them being the sole or primary provider of that care. Very few had other family commitments, with only two in the sample having responsibility for caring for a family member with an illness or disability, and one sharing responsibility for elder care. Ninety employees (84%) indicated that they had non-work responsibilities involving business/recreation, political or community roles, study, or sports commitments. Approximately half (52.2%) of these employees reported other business/recreation commitments; 50% were studying; 48.9% had sports commitments, and 12% were involved in political or community activities. Half the sample recorded involvement in two or more of these areas, with one person participating in all four.

Materials

Flexible Work Options Questionnaire (FWOQ; Albion, 2004). The first section of the FWOQ measured employees' usage patterns of flexible work options. Employees in the participating organisation had access to the following options: Unpaid leave, unpaid maternity or paternity leave, special leave, part-time employment, job sharing, flexible working hours, study leave, exam leave, carer's leave, and working from home.

It was acknowledged that some of these leave types may be used only occasionally, and that enquiring about current usage might not provide an adequate measure. As a means of obtaining a fuller measure of the use and acceptance of the various options, participants were asked to indicate, by marking each box which applied, their current and their immediate past and future use of all available flexible work options. A total usage score was calculated by summing responses to those three for each option. Scores could range from 0 (*no use*) to 3 (*have used in the past 12 months, am currently using, and will use in the next 12 months*).

The flexible work options were then classified into five separate categories. Flex group 1 consisted of options that were available for regular use by employees and that enabled variation without loss of pay. These were flexible working hours and working from home. Flex group 2 consisted of regular arrangements that involved reduced pay. These were part-time employment and job sharing. Flex group 3 was made up of unpaid maternity or paternity leave. Flex group 4 consisted of ad hoc provisions which

employees could access to meet unforeseen circumstances, namely, carer's, unpaid, and special leave, while Flex group 5 consisted of study and examination leave. Usage scores (*FG use 1-5*) for each Flex group type were then calculated by summing the scores for the options in each group. Scores on *FG use 1, 2, and 5* could range from 0 – 6, *FG use 3* could range from 0 – 3, and *FG use 4*, from 0 – 9.

The second section of the FWOQ consisted of two subscales: Work/Life Balance and Barriers. Participants rated 12 statements on a 5-point Likert scale from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*. A sample item from the Work/Life Balance scale is: “*Flexible working options are useful to me in order to be able to deal with other interests and responsibilities outside work.*” An item from the Barriers scale is: “*Flexible work options do not suit me because they make me feel disconnected from the workplace.*”

Work/Life Balance subscale scores were calculated by summing and averaging items 1, 5, 6, 7, and 8. High Work/Life Balance subscale scores indicate favourable attitudes to flexible work options. Barriers subscale scores were calculated by summing and averaging scores on items 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11 and 12. High scores suggest greater impact of these barriers in the use of flexible work options. The FWOQ was shown to have adequate consistency for research purposes ($\alpha = .71$), and its construct validity was demonstrated by its moderate prediction of the use of flexible work options (Albion, 2004).

Voice Climate Survey 2.0 (VCS; Langford, 2002). This consists of 120 items measuring 30 subscales. Eleven subscales (42 items) were selected for use as they were deemed likely to be related to measures of flexible work options in the sample organisation. For the purposes of this study, four of the scales were considered to be organisational outcome variables (Wellness, Job Satisfaction, Organisational Commitment, and Intention to Stay), while six were considered to be organisational climate variables associated with relationships and interactions in the workplace (Supervision, Communication and Cooperation, Employee Involvement, Team Cohesion, Processes, and Rewards and Recognition). The 4 items in the Work/Life Balance subscale were treated as marker variables and were examined separately rather than as a scale. These items were: *I maintain a good balance between work and other aspects of my life; I am able to stay involved in non-work interests and activities; I have a social life outside of work; I am able to meet my family responsibilities while still doing what is expected of me at work.* Participants

were instructed to rate each of the Voice Climate Survey items on a 6-point Likert scale from 0 (*No Opinion*), and 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). Langford demonstrated that the Voice Climate Survey had a stable factor structure (average loading of .72 to .75), sound internal reliability (Cronbach alphas across scales of .62 to .82), and good discriminant and concurrent predictive validities for three different samples.

Procedure

The study had the support of the organisation's regional managing partners and all 108 participants voluntarily completed the online survey in their own time. Instructions and reminders were sent via email. Participation in the researchers' university's annual cash raffle was offered as an incentive. Web security procedures ensured respondents' anonymity and confidentiality of data. The survey took about 25 minutes to complete.

RESULTS

Reliability coefficients were calculated for both instruments, and were found to be generally consistent with data provided by the scales' authors. A confirmatory factor analysis using the varimax principal axis factoring extraction method was conducted for each of the scales to confirm their subscale structure. While Albion (2004) suggested that the FWOQ was represented by two factors, the factor analysis of the current data suggested a three-factor solution (Work-life balance, Barriers-Personal, and Barriers-External), with the Barriers factor forming two distinct factors for these data. A total of 55.15% of the variance in item scores could be explained by these three factors. It was decided to use the three-factor structure to allow for clearer interpretability. Factor analysis of the 10 Voice Climate Survey subscales (Work/Life Balance was not included in this analysis, as items were being used separately as marker variables only) supported Langford's (2002) factor analysis, with 10 factors being generated with eigenvalues >1. The 10 factors explained 73.4% of the variance of item scores.

Chi-square analysis

Chi-square analyses were undertaken to determine the relationship between use of the various flexible work options and the characteristics of the sample. Tallies were taken of those who indicated they

had ever used or intended to use each of the flexible work options. Thirty respondents indicated that they used none of the options, while a number indicated that they had used multiple types. Study and examination leave (Flex group 5) were most utilised, with 50 respondents reporting their use. The next most commonly used were ad hoc leave types (Flex group 4) with 37 users, and no-pay-loss flex options (Flex group 1) with 32 users. Due to very small numbers of respondents who reported using Flex group 2 (part-time employment and job sharing, 8 respondents) and Flex group 3 (unpaid maternity or paternity leave, 5 respondents), these flexible work options were unable to be analysed, as small expected frequencies would violate the normality assumption (Howell, 1992). Similarly, numbers of respondents indicating responsibility for ill, disabled, or aged family members were very small and therefore these variables were also excluded from the Chi-square and further analyses. Results for Flex groups 1, 4, and 5 are shown in Table 1.

There were some significant differences ($p < .05$) in the use of flex time and working from home (Flex group 1). Employees over 30 years of age and those with dependent children are more likely to use these options, while those with sporting commitments are less likely to use them. Significant differences ($p < .05$) were also found for those who have taken study and/or examination leave (Flex group 5), with males, those aged 30 years or younger, those with study commitments, and those without dependent children generally showing a higher usage of these leave types. No differences were found on any of the demographic variables for ad hoc leave provisions (Flex group 4), including carers', unpaid, and special leave. While a gender difference may be inferred from the fact that there were 7 females and 1 male who indicated working part-time or job sharing, 5 females who used unpaid maternity leave, and no males who used unpaid paternity leave, it is regrettable that, in this sample, there were insufficient numbers of employees using these options to enable statistical analysis to support or refute the hypothesis that these flexible work options are more likely to be used by female employees. Non-work commitments such as recreation, business, or community involvement were not related to the use of flexible work options for this sample.

Insert Table 1 about here

Correlational analysis

To examine the relationships amongst the variables, pair-wise correlations were calculated (see Table 2). Confidence intervals around the correlations were produced using the online interactive tool, Simple Interactive Statistical Analysis (SISA; Uitenbroek, 1997).

The number of hours worked was negatively related ($p < .05$) to work/life balance and the ability to be involved in non-work interests and activities. The 95% confidence interval (CI) for the correlations is $-.09 < r < -.44$ (Uitenbroek, 1997), which indicates that the relationships have a small to medium effect using the criteria derived by Cohen (1988), who described correlations of .1 as small, .3 as medium, and .5 as large. However, long working hours were not significantly related to social life or meeting family commitments, but were associated with low job satisfaction (95% CI: $.02 < r < .38$) and lower levels of emotional wellness (95% CI: $.06 < r < .42$). It is interesting to note that hours worked were unrelated to any positive outcomes as measured by this study.

The marker variables with the strongest relationships with the organisational climate variables were items 2 (*I am able to stay involved in non-work interests and activities*) and 4 (*I am able to meet my family responsibilities while still doing what is expected of me at work*). This suggests that a balance of individuals' work and non-work roles and responsibilities is associated with better relationships and systems within the organisation. The interrelation between the system and the individuals was also demonstrated by the moderately high correlations between the External Barriers scale of the FWOQ and the marker variables. Those who endorsed high levels of work/life balance on each of the marker variables were less likely to report barriers to the use of flexible work options from within the organisation (e.g., Item 4, 95% CI: $-.18 < r < -.51$). No relationships were evident between the markers and the other two subscales of the FWOQ, nor between the markers and the use of the various types of flexible work options.

However, use of Flex Group 1 (flexible working hours and working from home) was significantly related, as hypothesised, to the relationship variables – Rewards and Recognition (95% CI: $.21 < r < .54$), Employee Involvement (95% CI: $.10 < r < .47$), Team Cohesion (95% CI: $.05 < r < .41$), and Processes (95% CI: $.05 < r < .41$), and to the outcome variables – Organisational Commitment (95% CI: $.05 < r < .42$), Job Satisfaction (95% CI: $.03 < r < .39$), and Intention to Stay (95% CI: $.002 < r < .37$). Use of Flex group 4 (ad hoc leave types) and Flex group 5 (study and exam leave) were less associated with relationship and outcome measures, with positive relationships emerging only between FG use 4 and Communication and Cooperation (95% CI: $.02 < r < .40$), Organisational Commitment (95% CI: $.09 < r < .45$), and Intention to Stay (95% CI: $.03 < r < .40$), and a negative relationship emerging between FG use 5 and Rewards and Recognition (95% CI: $-.04 < r < -.41$). These results suggest that ad hoc flexible arrangements were positively associated with commitment as were flextime and working from home, but that there was no similar relationship between commitment and study leave provisions, and that those who were studying tended to be dissatisfied with the income, conditions, and benefits they were receiving at work.

Insert Table 2 about here

DISCUSSION

The growing availability of flexible work practices presents both a challenge and an opportunity to career practitioners as they help clients negotiate their work/life goals. The challenge is to change attitudes. One of the aims of this study was to examine the use of flexible work options, and results indicated that while 72% of respondents used at least one of the flexible options available to them, the most common form was study and exam leave. It appears that, even though the organisation participating in this study has made efforts to enable the adoption of more flexible working practices, many of these options are still not widely used by their staff, either male or female. Given the strong tradition of full

time work and long hours in accounting firms, it is likely that it may take some time for the culture of the organisation to change sufficiently to render workplace flexibility more acceptable.

The opportunity is to provide individuals with real options that they can use in making choices that improve and balance life and work. Jarvis and Keeley (2003) defined the counselling role using the term career management rather than career development, making the point that managing a career involves adapting to various life phases. Feller (2006) noted the emergence of career coaching, a process by which people optimise their work/life interaction, and make life changes that provide linkages rather than build barriers between work and non-work domains.

Eighty-four percent of respondents indicated that they had non-work commitments other than family, and while it was hoped that this study might reveal a wider use of flexible work patterns to accommodate the broad spectrum of life interests, it appears that at least for this organisation, flexible practices are mostly related to managing family or study needs. Nevertheless, it is clear that the pattern of usage across the different flexible work types is complex, with employees under 30 being more likely to use study and exam leave, and those over 30 or those with dependant children being more likely to use flex time or to work from home. It is therefore important that future research continues to define flexibility when making predictions about its application in the workplace.

The correlational analysis conducted to examine the relationship between flexibility and the interrelationships within the organisation supported the assertion that balance within individuals would be associated with effective functioning of the organisational system. Results from this study show that involvement in non-work interests and the ability to meet family responsibilities were moderately to strongly related to organisational relationship and outcome variables.

Those who used flexible working hours, working from home, carer's leave, unpaid leave, and special leave had higher levels of Job Satisfaction, Organisational Commitment, and Intention to Stay than those not using those options. These results support research (Galinsky & Stein, 1990; Guzzo, Nelson, & Noonan, 1992; Lee, 1991; Thierry & Jansen, 1998) that reported on the benefits of flexible work. The provision of flexibility is associated with positive scores on most of the organisational climate

scales included in this study. Those who use flexible hours and working from home are more satisfied with the pay and benefits they receive, feel that they are more involved in the decision-making processes of the organisation, feel supported by their fellow workers, and have a clearer understanding of workplace policies and procedures. While concern about appearing to lack commitment has been identified as an issue preventing people using flexible work options (Pasashar, 2003), results suggest that those using flex time, working from home, or ad hoc leave arrangements have a higher level of commitment to the organisation and are more likely to stay. It is clear that flexibility is of benefit to both the individual and the organisation, and should therefore continue to be encouraged and facilitated.

The limited size of the study precluded the testing of gender bias in the use of part-time, job sharing and parenting leave, although the numbers suggested that these were predominantly used by women. Another limitation of the study was that the results may not be generalised to other organisations. Chartered accounting firms tend to employ a large number of young people who are fresh from school or university. Many are currently undertaking the chartered accounting program and have minimal family commitments. As the group was predominantly well below retirement age, there was also no opportunity to investigate the use that older employees may be making of flexible work options as a means of deferring their retirement.

Nevertheless, despite the particular shortcomings of this study, the results have added support to previous research that has shown that the usage of flexible work options is beneficial for both individuals and organisations. Through examining the organisation as a system, it has been shown that individual balance is reflected in more positive interactions within the workplace, and is associated with higher levels of commitment, well-being and job satisfaction for the individuals working within the system. Flexible work options can be confidently recommended to people who are searching for ways to enhance both life and work.

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Table 1

Chi-Square Analysis of FlexGroups.

Sample Characteristic		N=108	FlexGrp 1(n = 32)	FlexGrp 4(n = 37)	FlexGrp 5(n = 50)
			χ^2 (df)	χ^2 (df)	χ^2 (df)
Gender			.31(1)	.19(1)	6.70*(1)
	Male	38	10	12	24
	Female	70	22	25	26
Age			4.80*(1)	1.62(1)	25.89*(1)
	≤ 30	58	12	23	40
	> 30	50	20	14	10
Sport			6.70*(1)	2.83(1)	.02(1)
	Yes	44	7	11	20
	No	64	25	26	30
Politics/Community			.27(1)	.27(1)	1.78(1)
	Yes	11	4	3	3
	No	97	28	34	47
Business/Recreational			.16(1)	2.54(1)	.47(1)
	Yes	47	13	20	20
	No	61	19	17	30
Study			.33(1)	2.17(1)	50.57*(1)
	Yes	45	12	19	39
	No	63	20	18	11
Dependent children			3.9*(1)	.36(1)	10.90*(1)
	Yes	24	11	7	4
	No	84	21	30	46

Note: * $p < .05$.

FlexGrp 1 = Flextime, Working from home; FlexGrp 4 = Carer's, Unpaid, and Special Leave; FlexGrp 5 = Study & Exam Leave.

As respondents could indicate that they used more than one form of flexible work options, the sum of the *ns* for the various groups exceeds the total *N* for the sample (108).

Table 2

Correlational Data of Study, Family Responsibility, FlexGroups, FWO Scales, and VCS Scales.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1. Hrs worked	1																				
2. W/L Bal 1	-.27**	1																			
3. W/L Bal 2	-.28**	.74**	1																		
4. W/L Bal 3	-.16	.57**	.72**	1																	
5. W/L Bal 4	-.06	.69**	.70**	.56**	1																
6. FG use 1	-.10	.07	.16	.05	.18	1															
7. FG use 4	-.07	.02	.13	.13	.11	.16	1														
8. FG use 5	-.24*	.02	.02	-.07	-.16	-.06	.22*	1													
9. Balance	-.24*	.10	.14	.13	.03	.07	.10	.07	1												
10. Per Barriers	.10	-.11	-.11	-.02	-.04	-.23*	-.06	-.06	-.27**	1											
11. Ext Barriers	.16	-.27**	-.32**	-.23*	-.35**	-.28**	-.13	-.02	.09	.19	1										
12. Supervision	-.18	.29**	.27**	.28	.39**	.18	.13	-.03	.04	.09	-.38**	1									
13. Com/Coop	-.09	.13	.32**	.09	.24*	.17	.21*	.10	.03	-.16	-.40**	.22*	1								
14. Emp Invt	.13	.18	.25*	.04	.22*	.30**	.20	-.16	.02	-.12	-.25*	.17	.43**	1							
15. Team Coh	-.14	.25**	.21*	.09	.27**	.24*	.16	.11	.16	-.08	-.26**	.39**	.21*	.20*	1						

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
16. Processes	.01	.25*	.28**	.15	.39**	.24*	.10	.03	.18	-.12	-.33**	.42**	.38**	.28**	.41**	1					
17. Rewd/Recg	-.12	.32*	.34**	.17	.46**	.39**	.12	-.23*	-.12	-.05	-.35**	.20*	.28**	.41**	.23*	.28**	1				
18. Wellness	-.25*	.63**	.60**	.39**	.56**	.09	-.02	-.09	.20*	-.04	-.31**	.46**	.35**	.36**	.25*	.40**	.26**	1			
19 Job Satisfac	-.21*	.26**	.38**	.19	.30**	.22*	.11	-.02	.05	.12	-.21*	.44**	.33**	.30**	.38**	.32**	.30**	.49**	1		
20. Org Commt	-.03	.12	.30**	.23*	.19*	.24**	.28**	.00	.17	-.22*	-.22*	.31**	.41**	.46**	.32**	.33**	.33**	.29**	.58**	1	
21. Int to Stay	-.12	.10	.24*	.04	.13	.22*	.08	.08	.00	.18	-.20*	.41**	.32**	.43**	.22*	.30**	.27**	.37**	.62**	.56**	1

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

W/L Bal 1 = I maintain a good balance between work and other aspects of my life; W/L Bal 2 = I am able to stay involved in non-work interests and activities; W/L Bal 3 = I have a social life outside of work; W/L Bal 4 = I am able to meet my family responsibilities while still doing what is expected of me at work; FG use 1 = Flexible working hours and Working from home; FG use 4 = Carer's leave, Unpaid leave, and Special leave; FG use 5 = Study leave and Examination leave; Balance = Work/Life balance (FWOQ Scale); Per Barriers = Personal Barriers (FWOQ scale); Ext Barriers = External Barriers (FWOQ scale); Com/Coop = Communication and Cooperation; Emp Invt = Employee Involvement; Team Coh = Team Cohesion; Rewd/Recg = Rewards and Recognition; Job Satisfac = Job Satisfaction; Org Commt = Organisational Commitment; Int to Stay = Intention to Stay.

Authors

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Theory and Practice

This section is designed as a brief professional review of the article. It provides relevant study questions and answers for readers to test their knowledge of the article.

Are flexible work options only an issue for those with family commitments?

Answer: No, flexible work options may be important to all workers. While the goal of workplace flexibility has frequently been defined in terms of “family-friendliness”, it is becoming increasingly important for purposes other than managing family responsibilities. Older workers are using reduced hours or reduced levels of responsibilities as a means of making the transition into retirement or extending their working life. The demand for life-long learning has also meant many people now need to have access to study leave. Anyone seeking to find a good work/life balance may choose to use flexible work options.

Do people who use flexible work options do so because they are less committed to their work?

Answer: No, results of this study suggest the opposite. Those who use flex time or work from home have higher levels of commitment to their workplace. They are also likely to have higher levels of job satisfaction. It is indeed possible for people to maintain their

interest in and commitment to their career, while still ensuring that they have time to attend to other life interests and commitments. Managing one's career cannot be separated from managing one's life.