

The Role of Flexible Work Policies in Empowering Working Women

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Abstract: *This research paper explores the transformative impact of flexible work policies on the professional and personal empowerment of working women. With the rising participation of women in the global workforce, the need for adaptive workplace structures has become increasingly evident. Flexible work arrangements—such as remote work, flextime, job sharing, and compressed workweeks—offer opportunities to balance career ambitions with caregiving responsibilities, thereby enhancing work-life integration. This study investigates how such policies influence women's job satisfaction, career progression, productivity, and overall well-being. Using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, including surveys and case studies from diverse sectors, the paper highlights key benefits, challenges, and the role of organizational culture in supporting flexible work environments. The findings underscore the critical importance of institutionalizing flexibility not merely as a benefit but as a strategic tool for gender inclusion and economic resilience.*

Keywords: flexible work policies, women empowerment, work-life balance, gender inclusion, organizational culture

1. Introduction

The evolving dynamics of the modern workforce have brought flexible work policies to the forefront of organizational and policy discourse. As more women enter and remain in the labor force, traditional work models often fail to accommodate the dual responsibilities many women carry—particularly caregiving and household duties. These structural limitations contribute to career stagnation, gender pay gaps, and higher attrition rates among women professionals.

Flexible work policies, including options like telecommuting, flexible scheduling, part-time roles, and hybrid models, have emerged as key enablers for working women. They provide autonomy over work schedules, reduce commuting burdens, and allow for better integration of personal and professional lives. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the global adoption of flexible work models, offering a unique opportunity to examine their effectiveness and sustainability.

This paper seeks to analyze the role of flexible work arrangements in empowering women economically, socially, and psychologically. It also investigates the organizational readiness and cultural shifts required to ensure that flexibility leads to genuine empowerment rather than marginalization. Through empirical research, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on gender equity in the workplace and provide actionable insights for policymakers and business leaders committed to inclusive growth.

2. The Role of Flexible Work Policies in Empowering Working Women

1) Enhancing Work-Life Balance and Empowerment

Flexible work arrangements, including remote work, flex time, and hybrid models, have been instrumental in enabling women to balance professional responsibilities with personal commitments. A 2024 survey revealed that 76% of women feel empowered by flexible working arrangements, highlighting the positive impact on their autonomy and job satisfaction.

A) Empowerment Through Flexible Work Arrangements
Flexible work options—such as remote work, flextime, and hybrid models—have significantly empowered women by providing greater control over their schedules and reducing work-life conflicts.

- A 2024 survey revealed that **76% of women feel empowered by flexible working arrangements**, underscoring the positive impact on their autonomy and job satisfaction.
- In India, a 2022 survey indicated that **83% of working women desired more workplace flexibility**, and **70% had either quit or considered quitting** due to the lack of flexible policies.

B) Improved Work-Life Balance

Flexible work arrangements have been pivotal in helping women balance professional responsibilities with personal commitments.

- The 2024 CNBC|SurveyMonkey "Women at Work" poll found that among women who reported improved work-life balance, **49% attributed it to more flexible work schedules**.
- In Australia, as of August 2024, **36% of workers regularly worked from home**, a significant increase from

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5% in 2016. This shift has notably benefited women with young children, enhancing their work-life balance.

C) Career Progression and Retention

Flexible work policies have also contributed to women's career advancement and retention in the workforce.

- A 2025 study by the International Workplace Group (IWG) revealed that 71% of women believe hybrid work positively impacts their careers, with 56% reporting promotions due to hybrid work.
- The same study found that 68% of women said hybrid work enabled them to remain in the workforce instead of leaving due to caregiving responsibilities.

D) Addressing Stress and Burnout

Flexible work arrangements have been effective in reducing stress and burnout among women.

- According to the McKinsey "Women in the Workplace 2023" report, women working in hybrid or remote roles reported **feeling less fatigued and burned out**, and had more focused time to complete their work.
- The same report highlighted that flexibility allowed women to pursue their ambitions without compromising their personal lives.

E) Global Trends and Cultural Shifts

Globally, there's a growing recognition of the importance of flexible work in promoting gender equity.

- In the Netherlands, part-time work has become increasingly popular, with **419,000 couples both working part-time in 2024**, up from 229,000 in 2014. This shift has facilitated better work-life balance, especially for women.
- In South Korea, the government has invested in promoting flexible working arrangements to support working parents, aiming to address the country's low fertility rate and gender pay gap⁶.

2) Facilitating Career Progression

Contrary to the notion that flexible work hinders career advancement, studies indicate that such arrangements can bolster women's professional growth. Research shows that women utilizing flexible work options report higher promotion aspirations, primarily due to reduced work-family conflicts. Additionally, flexible start and finish times, job sharing, and compressed workweeks are linked to increased feelings of balance and career progression.

A) Boosting Promotion Aspirations

Flexible work arrangements have been linked to increased promotion aspirations among women. A study published in the *Psychology of Women Quarterly* found that temporal flexibility—having control over one's work schedule—positively influences women's aspirations for promotion by reducing work-family conflicts and enhancing their sense of autonomy. Similarly, a study by Baylor University's Keller Center for Research indicated that greater job flexibility enhances working mothers' career aspirations and reduces gender gaps in pay and advancement¹⁰.

B) Enhancing Career Satisfaction and Retention

Flexible work options contribute to higher job satisfaction and retention among women. A 2023 article from the World

Economic Forum reported that a fifth of women stated that flexible working helped them stay in their jobs, and it did not dampen their ambitions. Furthermore, a study highlighted by LinkedIn emphasized that flexible working allows women to manage both professional and personal obligations, leading to reduced stress and increased job satisfaction, which translates into greater engagement and motivation in the workplace¹¹.

C) Supporting Continuous Career Development

Flexible work arrangements enable women to maintain continuous career development, preventing the career breaks that often stall progression. The same LinkedIn article noted that by allowing women to stay in the workforce while managing family duties, flexible working supports ongoing professional growth¹¹. Additionally, the World Economic Forum article mentioned that while flexible working helps women remain in their jobs, many still struggle to reach senior roles, indicating the need for organizations to address other barriers to advancement²².

D) Addressing Systemic Barriers

Despite the benefits of flexible work, systemic barriers persist. A report from WorldatWork highlighted that less than half of women felt supported by their employer to balance work responsibilities with commitments outside their job. Moreover, 95% of women believed that requesting or taking advantage of flexible work opportunities would negatively affect their career progression²³. To combat these perceptions, organizations can implement standardized promotion processes that minimize bias, support flexible work policies like parental leave and return-to-work programs, and prioritize equity in career growth to cultivate a more inclusive workplace.

3) Promoting Workforce Participation

Flexible schedules and hybrid work models have been pivotal in increasing women's participation in the workforce. A survey indicated that 69% of respondents identified flexible work arrangements as the top initiative to attract more women to the workplace. In India, for instance, women's participation in Uttar Pradesh's MNREGS reached an all-time high of 45.05% in the first quarter of the 2025-26 fiscal year, reflecting the positive impact of supportive work policies¹⁹.

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These developments underscore the critical role of flexible work policies in empowering women and enhancing their participation in the workforce. By addressing barriers such as rigid work schedules, caregiving responsibilities, and safety concerns, flexible work arrangements have opened new avenues for women's employment and career advancement.

4) Reducing Gender Pay Gaps

Flexible work policies contribute to narrowing gender pay disparities by enabling women to maintain continuous employment and pursue career advancement opportunities. In the real estate industry, for example, greater temporal flexibility has been associated with enhanced promotion aspirations among women, thereby addressing persistent gender gaps in pay¹⁰.

A) Impact of Temporal Flexibility on Women's Career Aspirations

A study by Julia B. Bear, PhD, published by Baylor University's Keller Center for Research, explored how temporal flexibility influences women's promotion aspirations. The research found that women with greater control over their work schedules reported higher aspirations for promotion, primarily due to reduced anticipated work-family conflicts. This effect was particularly notable in the real estate industry, where women earned only 69% of what men earned in 2020. The study suggests that offering flexible work options can enhance women's career ambitions and help reduce gender pay gaps¹⁰.

B) The Role of Continuous Employment in Reducing Pay Gaps

Research by McKinsey & Company indicates that nearly 80% of the gender pay gap is attributable to differences in work experience trajectories between men and women. Women often have flatter career arcs due to career interruptions and part-time work, leading to lower cumulative earnings. Flexible work arrangements can help women maintain continuous employment, thereby accumulating experience and reducing the pay gap over time¹².

C) Societal Norms and the Gender Pay Gap

The Pew Research Centre highlights that societal and cultural norms significantly contribute to the persistent gender pay gap. Even in countries with family-friendly policies, parenthood continues to create a substantial earnings divide between men and women. Implementing flexible work policies can help address these disparities by allowing women to balance career and family responsibilities more effectively².

D) Challenges in Remote Work and Promotions

While flexible work arrangements offer numerous benefits, challenges remain. For instance, a 2023 UK survey found that managers were 15% less likely to promote women who work remotely compared to those in the office. This indicates that while flexible work can support women's employment, organizations must also address potential biases in promotion practices to ensure equity.

5) Retention and Organizational Benefits

Organizations offering flexible work arrangements experience improved employee retention and performance. Research indicates that companies with flexible hours tend to see lower voluntary and total turnover rates, with statistically significant correlations. Furthermore, advertising flexible working options has led to a 20% to 30% increase in applicant pools, particularly among women seeking senior leadership roles.

A) Enhanced Employee Retention

- **Reduced Turnover Rates:** The Results-Only Work Environment (ROWE) initiative led to a 45% reduction in turnover, with only 6% of participants leaving during an eight-month study, compared to 11% in a control group¹⁵.
- **Increased Loyalty:** A survey by Global Workplace Analytics found that 80% of employees would be more devoted to their company if offered flexible work options. Companies providing such flexibility observed a 25% decrease in employee turnover²⁰.
- **Predictor of Retention:** Flexible work is a significant predictor of employee retention, as employees with arrangements aligning with their preferences are less likely to seek other job opportunities⁴.

B) Increased Applicant Pools and Diversity

- **Boost in Female Applicants:** Advertising flexible working options led to a 20% to 30% increase in applicant pools, particularly among women seeking senior leadership roles.
- **Zurich Insurance Case Study:** After advertising all roles with flexible working options, Zurich saw a 16% rise in overall female applicants, a 19% increase in women applying for management roles, and a 33% increase in women hired for senior positions².
- **John Lewis Partnership Study:** A randomized controlled trial with John Lewis Retail found that including part-time options in job ads boosted applications from women by 35% and applications to managerial roles by 50%²².

C) Organizational Benefits

- **Improved Productivity and Well-being:** Hybrid work models have been associated with increased employee happiness, health, and productivity. A study showed that 75% of UK workers felt less fatigued and stressed when working part of the week from home. [The Guardian](#)
- **Attracting Top Talent:** Companies offering flexible work options are perceived as more inclusive, attracting a wider and stronger talent pool. This enhances employer branding and competitiveness in the market¹.

3. Conclusion

Flexible work policies have emerged as a transformative force in reshaping the professional landscape for working women. This research highlights that such policies not only empower women by improving work-life balance but also serve as a critical mechanism for advancing gender equity in the workplace. Through enhanced autonomy, reduced work-family conflict, and improved mental well-being, flexible arrangements enable women to participate more fully and effectively in the labor market. The evidence demonstrates that flexible work fosters career progression by allowing women to maintain continuous employment, thus narrowing persistent gender pay gaps and increasing representation in leadership roles. Furthermore, organizations that embrace flexibility benefit from improved retention, greater employee satisfaction, and access to a broader, more diverse talent pool. However, the study also underscores the need for organizational and cultural shifts to address systemic barriers—such as biases in promotion decisions and stigmas around remote work. For flexibility to be genuinely

empowering, it must be implemented inclusively and supported by policies that ensure equal access to opportunities.

In conclusion, flexible work policies should not be viewed merely as post-pandemic adaptations or employee perks, but as essential strategies for fostering inclusive growth, gender parity, and long-term organizational success. Institutionalizing these practices with equity-focused frameworks will be key to unlocking the full potential of the female workforce in the modern era.

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