

IMPACT OF FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS ON EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION WITHIN THE IT SECTOR IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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Abstract

In response to the dynamic shifts in the contemporary work landscape, organizations are strategically leveraging Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) to optimize employee satisfaction and retain top-tier talent. This study delves into the impact of FWAs, including remote work, hybrid models, and flexible working hours, on employee satisfaction within Bosnia and Herzegovina's Information Technology (IT) sector. Employing a quantitative approach, the survey of 122 IT professionals reveals a substantial positive correlation between FWAs and employee satisfaction. Respondents highlight enhancements in work-life balance, heightened productivity, and increased job satisfaction as key outcomes. The study contributes theoretically by advancing the understanding of FWAs in the dynamic IT sector and offers practical insights for IT companies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Emphasizing the strategic importance of judicious FWA implementation aligned with organizational goals, the study advocates continuous adaptation based on feedback and best practices. The findings of this study extend beyond the IT sector, providing valuable insights for academia and industry, enriching the discourse on contemporary work arrangements, and guiding organizations toward fostering conducive work environments.

Key words: Flexible working arrangement, employee satisfaction, remote work, hybrid work, flexible working hours, Information technology (IT)

JEL Classification: J24, O15, M15, M54

I. INTRODUCTION

The conventional contours of the working landscape are undergoing a profound metamorphosis, driven by the confluence of technological advancement and evolving societal demands. In this transformative tide, the Information Technology (IT) sector stands as a crucible for change, notably characterized by the pervasive integration of Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs). As contemporary work norms transcend the boundaries of a traditional 9-to-5 structure, the demarcation between office and home blurs, ushering in an era of flexibility in how, where, and when work is executed. This paradigm shift, hastened by the global upheaval of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, is not merely a reaction to crisis but a lasting evolution indicative of the necessity for adaptive work models. Recognizing this paradigm shift is particularly imperative for the IT sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a burgeoning hub that significantly contributes to the nation's economic development (EBRD, 2022). Despite its commendable growth, a conspicuous void exists in the literature concerning Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) within the BiH IT sector.

This study aims to bridge this gap by meticulously examining the relationship between FWAs—encompassing remote work, hybrid models, and flexible hours—and employee satisfaction. By unraveling the nuanced interplay between flexible work practices and employee contentment, this study seeks to guide the formulation of more informed human resource policies. Ultimately, this endeavor aims to foster an environment favorable to both individual well-being and organizational prosperity within the dynamic framework of the IT sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The contemporary evolution of the work place has seen a significant increase in the adoption of Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs), which grant employees greater autonomy over when and where they work (Avery & Zabel, 2001). The origins of these arrangements can be traced back to a German aerospace company's innovative efforts in 1967, aimed at alleviating issues such as clock-in lines and traffic congestion (Avery & Zabel, 2001). The implementation of flexible scheduling not only addressed these challenges but also led to notable

improvements in productivity, reduced absenteeism, and substantial monthly savings amounting to \$40,000 by 1972 (Abid & Barech, 2017). Jon Atkinson's Flexible Firm model in 1986 laid the foundation for FWAs, with practices like flexible time and place, remote work, and hybrid models (Bekele & Mohammed, 2020). Defined by Weideman and Hofmeyr (2021) as self-management techniques allowing employees to control schedules, energy, attention, and work location, FWAs encompass types such as irregular (unpaid leave for personal pursuits) and regular flexibility, the latter being the focus of this study.

Studies indicate that remote work, hybrid work, and flexible working hours are associated with increased job satisfaction (Allen et al., 2015; Chafi et al., 2022; Dizaho et al., 2017). Furthermore, FWAs offer organizations significant cost reductions and economic benefits (Hrobowski-Culbreath, 2010; Kotey & Sharma, 2019; Global Workplace Analytics, 2020) and contribute to environmental sustainability by reducing emissions and energy consumption (Tao et al., 2023). However, challenges in implementing FWAs include direct costs, potential abuses, and blurred work-life boundaries (Hrobowski-Culbreath, 2010; Clarke & Holdsworth, 2017; Gigauri, 2020), necessitating a strategic approach that considers individualized needs and promotes work-life balance (Attwood, 2018; Sabuhari et al., 2020).

The adoption of FWAs is influenced by organizational culture, management support, technology, and employee preferences (Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2021; Kumar et al., 2023). Successful adoption is recommended to involve careful planning, clear goals, training, and continuous monitoring (KMPG, 2022). Balancing potential drawbacks with transformative benefits is deemed crucial (Waddington & Bell, 2021; Austin-Egole et al., 2022).

In the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic, FWAs have become integral to human resource strategies globally (People at Work Study, 2022). Approximately 16% of companies worldwide have adopted fully remote models, with 62% engaging in remote work occasionally (Owl Labs, 2022). Effective practices hinge on aligning FWAs with organizational needs, fostering communication, role identification, assessment, and continuous evaluation (Botrel Vilela, 2021;).

Employee satisfaction, a crucial concept in human resource management, is closely tied to organizational productivity (Kaur & Mittal, 2020). Job satisfaction, as defined by Spector (1997), encompasses feelings toward various job aspects and is linked to commitment, motivation, well-being, and passion. Research emphasizes its role in organizational success, as satisfied employees are more productive, loyal, and less prone to job turnover (Ghani et al., 2022). Determinants of employee satisfaction include job security, with perceived stability fostering control and satisfaction (Drosos et al., 2021). Leadership style is crucial, as participative and transformational approaches positively impact employee satisfaction (Pratama, 2022). Organizational culture emphasizing teamwork and open communication enhances job satisfaction, while fair compensation contributes significantly (Samanta A.K., 2021). Additionally, FWAs positively impact employee satisfaction, fostering work-life balance and well-being (Allen et al., 2015; Andrade et al., 2019). Studies highlight the linear relationship between schedule flexibility and satisfaction, emphasizing the benefits of remote work (ILO, 2023; Shifrin & Michel, 2022).

The measurement of employee satisfaction is critical for understanding organizational behavior. Widely used tools include the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS), Job Descriptive Index (JDI), and Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ). These instruments evaluate various facets, providing reliable insights into employee perspectives and aiding organizational improvement.

The Information Technology (IT) sector has experienced a surge in the popularity of flexible working arrangements (Ridić et al., 2016). Remote work and flexible working hours offer cost savings, contributing to work-life balance, and enhanced job satisfaction (GoodHire, 2021). Tech workers now prioritize flexibility, influencing compensation discussions and creating a competitive edge for employers (McKinsey & Company, 2022). While beneficial, challenges of FWAs include potential isolation, communication issues, and impacts on organizational culture, necessitating strategic planning and evaluation (McKinsey & Company, 2020).

The IT sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina, constituting 5.5% of the national value added in 2021, plays a significant role in the country's economic development (EBRD, 2022). The sector has experienced growth in employment, export value, and revenue, painting a promising picture for the overall economic landscape. However, there are challenges that need to be addressed to ensure sustainable growth, including insufficient government support, educational gaps, and unfavorable tax regulations. Targeted policies are required to navigate these challenges effectively. Despite the limited literature on Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) in Bosnia and Herzegovina's IT sector, a study by Ridić et al. (2016) sheds light on the positive impact of FWAs on work-life balance and employee efficiency. The research not only highlights the widespread acceptance of FWAs within the sector but also emphasizes the necessity for future development and promotion of such arrangements. This underscores the potential benefits of FWAs in enhancing both the working conditions and overall efficiency of employees in the IT sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to investigate the impact of three flexible working arrangements (FWAs) - remote work, hybrid work, and flexible working hours - on employee satisfaction within the Information Technology (IT) sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Qualitative research was conducted using a structured online survey distributed to 400 IT sector employees in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The survey encompassed measurable, categorical, and demographic questions. The data collected was analyzed using multiple regression statistical methods in SPSS to assess the impact of independent variables (three types of FWAs) on the dependent variable (employee satisfaction). The target population comprised IT sector employees in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Non-probabilistic convenience sampling yielded a sample of 122 respondents. The sample aimed for diversity but may not fully represent the entire IT sector population, thus caution is advised in generalizing the findings.

Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, provided initial insights. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test assessed data distribution, Pearson's correlation explored variable correlations, and the Kruskal-Wallis test aided hypothesis testing. Multiple regression analysis, considering Likert, ordinal, and categorical scale responses as independent variables, examined the relationship with employee satisfaction. The approach facilitated understanding the unique contribution of each FWA type to variance in employee satisfaction.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the pursuit of understanding the nuanced dynamics between Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) and employee satisfaction within the Information Technology (IT) sector of Bosnia and Herzegovina, this study delved into a comprehensive exploration backed by robust data analysis.

Initially reaching out to 400 employees in Bosnia and Herzegovina's IT sector, the structured survey garnered responses from 122 individuals, yielding a response rate of around 30.5%. To align with the research focus on Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs), the inclusion criterion was applied, narrowing down the participant pool to 116 individuals who confirmed access to FWAs. These participants provided key insights into the impact of various FWAs on employee satisfaction. The sample, obtained through diverse recruitment channels, demonstrated balanced gender distribution (42.6% female, 57.4% male) and diversity in age, education, and experience. A majority of respondents held a Bachelor's degree (52.5%), while 38.5% possessed Master's degrees, and 9.0% had High School Diplomas, contributing to a varied educational profile. Participants' years of experience in the IT sector ranged from early-career enthusiasts to seasoned professionals, adding a dynamic element to the study.

The prevalence of flexible work arrangements was a crucial aspect of understanding the contemporary work landscape. Out of the 116 participants engaged in the study within the Information Technology sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a substantial proportion reported having access to various flexible work options. Remote work, a prominent feature of modern work environments, was accessible to 62.1% of the participants. This indicates a significant embrace of technology-driven work practices, allowing employees to fulfill their responsibilities from locations beyond the traditional office setting. The prevalence of remote work underscores the adaptability of the Information Technology sector to evolving workplace trends and the integration of digital tools. Hybrid work, characterized by a flexible mix of in-office and remote work, emerged as an even more prevalent arrangement, with 79.3% of participants having the option to engage in this flexible work model. The high percentage suggests a widespread acceptance and implementation of hybrid work models within IT organizations in the country. This flexibility likely caters to a diverse range of employee preferences, accommodating those who thrive in both collaborative office environments and the autonomy of remote work. Furthermore, flexible working hours, affording employees the freedom to set their work schedules within certain limits, were accessible to 59.5% of participants. This finding highlights an acknowledgment of the diverse needs of employees, recognizing that a one-size-fits-all approach to work hours may not be conducive to optimal productivity and job satisfaction. The prevalence of flexible working hours in the IT sector suggests an organizational commitment to creating a work environment that aligns with individual lifestyles and maximizes employee well-being.

Table 1 Prevalence of Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) within the IT sector in BiH

Type of FWA	Prevalence (%)
Remote Work	62.1%
Hybrid Work	79.3%
Flexible Working Hours	59.5%
Most Prevalent FWA	Hybrid Work 79.3%

Descriptive statistics played a pivotal role in unveiling the impact of flexible work arrangements, namely remote work, hybrid work, and flexible working hours, on key aspects of the work experience. The focus areas included work-life balance, productivity, and personal/family time.

In the endeavor to delve into the intricate dynamics of employee satisfaction within the IT sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a robust methodology was deployed, involving the creation of a composite variable termed "Employee Satisfaction." Synthesizing responses from 116 participants, this variable encapsulated diverse dimensions of the work experience, specifically gauging perceptions of work-life balance, productivity, and the impact on personal and family time. The meticulous analysis illuminated remarkably high mean scores across these aspects, indicating overwhelmingly positive perceptions regarding the influence of flexible work arrangements. For work-life balance, participants accorded commendable mean scores to remote work (Mean = 4.42), hybrid work (Mean = 4.26), and flexible working hours (Mean = 4.33), reflecting a consensus that these arrangements significantly contribute to achieving a better work-life balance. Likewise, productivity and job satisfaction garnered positive mean scores, affirming the favorable impact of remote work (Mean = 4.26), hybrid work (Mean = 4.18), and flexible working hours (Mean = 4.34). While standard deviations hinted at some diversity in participants' views, the overall trend leaned toward positive perceptions. Furthermore, flexible work arrangements were perceived as contributors to providing additional personal and family time, as evidenced by favorable mean scores for remote work (Mean = 4.35), hybrid work (Mean = 4.04), and flexible working hours (Mean = 4.29). These descriptive statistics underscore the sector's adaptability and emphasize the potential of flexible work arrangements to cultivate a work environment attuned to employee well-being and satisfaction.

Following the descriptive statistics, a crucial step in the analysis was the correlation analysis, aimed at unraveling the intricate relationships between employee satisfaction and the defined flexible work arrangements. The correlation matrix, generated through Pearson correlation analysis, scrutinized the statistical associations between variables. Our dataset, consisting of 116 participants, enabled us to evaluate the strength and direction of these correlations. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) and associated p-values laid bare significant insights into the interconnected nature of employee satisfaction and flexible work arrangements.

Table 2 Correlation matrix

Variable	Aspect	Correlation (r)	Significance (p-value)	Sample Size (N)
Remote Work	Work-life balance	0.639**	0.000	116
Remote Work	Productivity and Job Satisfaction	0.729**	0.000	116
Remote Work	More Personal/Family Time	0.467**	0.000	116
Hybrid Work	Work-life balance	0.485**	0.000	116
Hybrid Work	Productivity and Job Satisfaction	0.487**	0.000	116
Hybrid Work	More Personal/Family Time	0.323**	0.000	116
Flexible Working Hours	Work-life balance	0.562**	0.000	116
Flexible Working Hours	Productivity and Job Satisfaction	0.554**	0.000	116
Flexible Working Hours	More Personal/Family Time	0.360**	0.000	116

The observed correlations have unveiled robust positive relationships, confirming that favorable perceptions of flexible work arrangements are associated with increased employee satisfaction.

Remote work exhibited robust positive correlations with employee satisfaction across key dimensions: better work-life balance ($r = 0.639, p < 0.001$), enhanced productivity and job satisfaction ($r = 0.729, p < 0.001$), and provision of more personal/family time ($r = 0.467, p < 0.001$). Similarly, hybrid work showcased positive correlations with these dimensions, though slightly less pronounced. The correlations between hybrid work and

better work-life balance, productivity/job satisfaction, and personal/family time were 0.485, 0.487, and 0.323, respectively (all $p < 0.001$). Flexible working hours also correlated positively with employee satisfaction dimensions: better work-life balance ($r = 0.562, p < 0.001$), enhanced productivity/job satisfaction ($r = 0.554, p < 0.001$), and provision of more personal/family time ($r = 0.360, p < 0.001$). This correlation analysis served as a pivotal juncture within the study, providing empirical support for the proposition that a positive perception of flexible work arrangements corresponds to heightened employee satisfaction.

Following the completion of preliminary analyses, the study progressed to hypothesis testing, employing a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test to scrutinize the proposed hypotheses. The hypotheses were formulated with sub-hypotheses to provide a nuanced understanding of specific aspects within each broader hypothesis, contributing to a comprehensive examination of the relationships at play.

Hypothesis 1 (H1) posited a significant relationship between remote work and employee satisfaction. The Kruskal-Wallis test, which analyzed sub-hypotheses related to work-life balance (H1.1), productivity (H1.2), and personal time (H1.3), revealed highly significant associations, all of which were supported (H1.1: Kruskal-Wallis $H = 43.407, p < 0.001$, H1.2: Kruskal-Wallis $H = 56.828, p < 0.001$, H1.3: Kruskal-Wallis $H = 26.979, p < 0.001$). These sub-hypotheses were crafted based on specific survey questions related to remote work, providing detailed insights into various dimensions of how remote work influences employee satisfaction.

Transitioning to Hypothesis 2 (H2), the impact of hybrid work arrangements on employee satisfaction was explored. The Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a highly significant relationship between hybrid work and work-life balance (H2.1), productivity (H2.2), and personal time (H2.3), with each sub-hypothesis supported (H2.1: Kruskal-Wallis $H = 28.246, p < 0.001$, H2.2: Kruskal-Wallis $H = 36.068, p < 0.001$, H2.3: Kruskal-Wallis $H = 18.604, p < 0.001$). The sub-hypotheses were designed to dissect specific dimensions of hybrid work, offering nuanced insights into how it influenced employee satisfaction. Hypothesis 3 (H3), investigated the impact of flexible working hours on employee satisfaction. The Kruskal-Wallis test demonstrated a highly significant relationship between flexible working hours and work-life balance (H3.1), productivity (H3.2), and personal time (H3.3), and each sub-hypothesis was supported (H3.1: Kruskal-Wallis $H = 45.058, p < 0.001$, H3.2: Kruskal-Wallis $H = 35.301, p < 0.001$, H3.3: Kruskal-Wallis $H = 20.749, p < 0.001$). These sub-hypotheses, derived from specific survey questions, delved into distinct facets of flexible working hours, providing detailed insights into the relationship between flexible hours and employee satisfaction. The robust support for all three hypotheses underscores the pivotal role of flexible work arrangements, including remote work, hybrid models, and flexible working hours, in positively influencing and optimizing employee satisfaction in the Information Technology sector of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Table 3 Hypotheses Results

Hypotheses	Results
There is a significant relationship between remote working arrangements and employee satisfaction within the Information technology (IT) sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina.	SUPPORTED
The impact of hybrid work arrangements has a positive effect on employee satisfaction within the Information technology (IT) sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina.	SUPPORTED
Flexible working hours have a positive impact on employee satisfaction within the Information technology (IT) sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina.	SUPPORTED

Building upon the significant relationships identified in the hypothesis test, multiple regression analysis was performed for a detailed exploration of the strength and nature of these relationships. Before conducting the regression analysis, the correlations between Employee Satisfaction and the independent variables were examined. The correlation highlighted strong and statistically significant relationships between Employee Satisfaction and all independent variables ($p < 0.001$), underscoring their potential significance in predicting employee satisfaction levels within the IT sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Certain independent variables were excluded from the regression model as they did not demonstrate a statistically significant influence on Employee Satisfaction. The variables retained for analysis were those with notable impact, including the perception that remote work and hybrid work enabled better work-life balance, positively impacted productivity and job satisfaction, and allowed more personal and family time, along with the perception that flexible working hours contributed to a better work-life balance.

The regression model's effectiveness was assessed through various statistical indicators, including R-squared, adjusted R-squared, standard error of the estimate (SEE), the F-statistic, and its associated p-value. These metrics collectively indicated the explanatory power of the model. The adjusted R-squared value of 0.613 indicated that around 61.3% of the fluctuations observed in Employee Satisfaction could be accounted for by the selected independent variables. The F-statistic ($F=37.359, p < 0.001$) affirmed that the combined impact of the independent

variables was a robust indicator of Employee Satisfaction.

Table 3 Regression Model Summary Statistics

Model	R2	Adj. R2	SEE	F	Sig. F
1	0,629	0,613	0,396	37,359	0,000b

The coefficients contained within the regression model unveiled crucial insights into the strength and significance of the relationship between each independent variable and Employee Satisfaction. Importantly, all coefficients demonstrated associated p-values below the conventional significance threshold of 0.05. This signifies not only statistical significance but also underscores the meaningful and impactful role of each variable within the model. The results imply that factors such as the perception of remote work enabling a better work-life balance, the positive influence of remote work on productivity and job satisfaction, the positive impact of hybrid work on productivity and job satisfaction, and the belief that flexible working hours contribute to a better work-life balance all play significant and meaningful roles in predicting and influencing Employee Satisfaction within the Information Technology sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The regression equation, derived from the coefficients, offered a mathematical expression for forecasting Employee Satisfaction based on the selected independent variables.

$$\text{Employee Satisfaction} =$$

$$1.654 + (0.150 \times Q19) + (0.305 \times Q20) + (0.187 \times Q23) + (-0.137 \times Q24) + (0.138 \times Q25)$$

The positive coefficients for variables related to remote and hybrid work arrangements and flexible working hours suggested that employees associating these arrangements with improved work-life balance, increased productivity, and job satisfaction reported higher overall satisfaction. The nuanced impact of variables, particularly the negative effect of "Hybrid work allowing more personal and family time," highlighted the complexity of satisfaction dynamics.

The multiple regression analysis validated the initial hypotheses (H1, H2, H3), affirming that remote work, hybrid work, and flexible working hours significantly influence employee satisfaction within the IT sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The findings contribute empirical support to the pivotal role of flexible work arrangements in shaping employee well-being in the specified industry and geographical context.

V. CONCLUSION

This study, rooted in an extensive literature review, investigated the nuanced landscape of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) within the Information Technology sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Guided by three hypotheses, the research aimed to examine the correlations between remote work, hybrid work arrangements, flexible working hours, and heightened employee satisfaction.

The findings strongly supported H1, revealing that remote work positively influenced satisfaction across work-life balance, productivity, and personal time. Similarly, H2 and H3 were affirmed, demonstrating the positive impact of hybrid work arrangements and flexible working hours on employee satisfaction. These positive correlations underscored a symbiotic relationship, emphasizing that it was not merely about offering flexibility but optimizing these arrangements for a positive work experience.

Crucially, the study elucidated that for remote work, the perceived enhancement in work-life balance significantly contributed to job satisfaction. The flexibility to adapt work schedules fostered a sense of control over personal and professional life, reinforcing overall job satisfaction. Hybrid work arrangements, balancing in-office and remote work, offered the best of both worlds, contributing to improved work-life balance and heightened satisfaction. Flexible working hours, allowing individuals to tailor their schedules, played a pivotal role in influencing job satisfaction by facilitating better work-life balance and fostering autonomy.

A multiple regression analysis reaffirmed the significance of flexible work arrangements, with independent variables explaining approximately 61.3% of the variance in employee satisfaction. This empirical validation supports the evolving nature of the contemporary workplace. Moreover, the study extended previous limited research, thus contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the impact of FWAs on employee satisfaction within the IT sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

For organizational leaders and HR managers, the study underscores that FWAs are not a one-size-fits-all solution. Instead, it advocates for a judicious and strategic application, aligned with organizational goals and strategies. This tailored approach is essential in the dynamic and competitive IT sector, where attracting and

retaining top-tier talent requires ongoing evaluations and responsiveness to industry trends.

In the post-pandemic era, the study gains added significance, offering timely insights into the strategic importance of FWAs. It suggests that beyond being a response to external circumstances, the adoption of FWAs can be a deliberate and forward-thinking strategy for organizations aiming to thrive and foster a positive, adaptive work environment.

In conclusion, this study's ramifications extend beyond academia, reaching into the practical realm of the IT sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina. By filling a research gap, the results emphasize the strategic necessity of integrating FWAs thoughtfully to enhance employee satisfaction. Moreover, beyond the IT sector, the study sheds light on a broader societal context, emphasizing that organizations fostering flexible arrangements lead the way in cultivating work environments that are both positive and adaptive.

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