

Promoting Flexible Work Arrangements: The Case of Selected Medium-Size BPO Company in Metro Manila



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ABSTRACT: This study examined the impact of Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) on employee engagement, retention, productivity, and work-life balance in selected medium-size BPO companies in Metro Manila. A convergent mixed-methods research design was employed, integrating survey responses (n=286) with qualitative interviews. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model provided the framework to assess FWAs as job resources that mitigate workplace demands and enhance employee well-being. Results showed that hybrid work (M=4.30) and telecommuting (M=4.25) had the most positive effects on engagement, retention ($r=0.61$), and productivity ($B=0.45$, $p < 0.001$). Employees with caregiving responsibilities and younger workers reported the highest satisfaction with FWAs. Key benefits included improved well-being (82%) and reduced stress (85%), aligning with previous research on workplace flexibility. However, challenges such as communication barriers (48%) and blurred work-life boundaries (41%) were identified, highlighting the complexities of managing hybrid workforces. This study contributes to the growing literature on FWAs, particularly in high-stress environments like call centers. It underscores the importance of structured implementation, technological support, and tailored policies to maximize FWAs' effectiveness. Organizations must integrate FWAs as a core strategy for sustainable workforce management. Future research should examine FWAs across multiple industries and cultural contexts to enhance generalizability and inform policymaking in the evolving global labor market.

KEYWORDS: Flexible Work Arrangements, Employee Engagement, Retention, Productivity, Work-Life Balance, Job Demands-Resources Model

I. INTRODUCTION

The business process outsourcing (BPO) industry has experienced rapid transformation over the past two decades, driven by globalization, digitalization, and evolving workforce expectations. As companies sought to optimize operations and remain competitive, employee engagement, retention, and productivity became critical concerns. One emerging strategy to address these concerns was the implementation of flexible work arrangements (FWAs), which included telecommuting, flexible scheduling, job sharing, hybrid setups, and shifting schedules (Kossek & Thompson, 2016).

The demand for FWAs was further amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated remote work and accelerated the shift toward flexible employment structures (Bloom et al., 2021). This shift challenged traditional work models, compelling organizations to reassess their workforce management strategies. While FWAs were widely recognized for enhancing work-life balance, employee satisfaction, and overall organizational performance (Galanti et al., 2021), their adoption in high-demand industries such as BPOs presented unique opportunities and challenges.

Historically, the BPO industry's high attrition rates, job-related stress, and rigid schedules contributed to workforce instability (Allen et al., 2020). Implementing FWAs was considered a critical intervention to mitigate these challenges, improve employee well-being, and enhance job performance. However, despite growing interest, empirical studies examining the effectiveness of FWAs within the BPO sector remained limited, particularly in the context of Metro Manila, a central hub for outsourcing services.

This study explored the impact of FWAs on employee engagement, retention, and productivity within Sterling Global Call Center Inc., a medium-sized BPO company in Metro Manila. By employing a mixed-methods approach, the research provided empirical insights into the effectiveness of FWAs and identified best practices for their successful implementation. The findings contributed to existing literature by bridging the gap between flexible work models and employee performance in the BPO sector, offering practical recommendations for industry leaders and policymakers.

II. LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESIS

A. Literature Review

1. Flexible Work Arrangements in the BPO Industry

The BPO sector has increasingly adopted FWAs to address employee burnout, high attrition rates, and work-life balance concerns (Galanti et al., 2021). Empirical evidence suggests that FWAs contribute to more excellent workforce stability and increased organizational commitment (Allen et al., 2020). Furthermore, research indicates that flexible schedules and remote work reduce stress and improve overall job satisfaction (Choudhury et al., 2021).

2. Employee Engagement and Retention

Schaufeli (2021) states that FWAs significantly influence employee motivation and commitment by offering greater autonomy and control over work schedules. Customizing work hours leads to enhanced work-life balance and reduced burnout, key factors contributing to employee retention (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

3. FWAs and Employee Productivity

Productivity remains a central concern in evaluating the effectiveness of FWAs. Studies suggest that FWAs positively impact productivity by reducing commute times, minimizing workplace distractions, and allowing employees to work during their peak hours of efficiency (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). The Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) emphasizes that autonomy in work arrangements enhances intrinsic motivation, improving performance. Similarly, the JD-R Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) posits that job resources such as FWAs mitigate work-related stress and enhance job performance by optimizing employee energy and focus. Furthermore, Bloom et al. (2015) found that remote work increased productivity by 13%, as employees experienced fewer distractions and took fewer breaks.

Empirical research also suggests that FWAs can lead to enhanced efficiency in work execution. According to Bailey and Kurland (2002), employees with flexible work arrangements often display higher task completion rates and improved time management skills. Additionally, Butler et al. (2020) highlighted that hybrid work setups, which combine remote and on-site work, allow employees to experience the benefits of both models—social interaction and collaboration alongside autonomy and reduced commute stress. However, studies also indicate potential downsides, including reduced informal knowledge-sharing and the risk of work-life boundary-blurring, which may offset productivity gains if not well managed (Golden & Veiga, 2005).

4. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), which posits that job resources (e.g., flexibility and autonomy) can buffer job demands and enhance employee well-being and performance. The Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989) further supports the argument that employees with more excellent flexibility experience lower stress levels and improved productivity. Additionally, the Person-Environment Fit Theory (Edwards & Shipp, 2007) suggests that job satisfaction and performance are significantly enhanced when employees' work environments align with their preferences—such as through FWAs.

5. Challenges in Implementation

Potential drawbacks include communication barriers, coordination difficulties, and performance monitoring concerns (Batt & Colvin, 2021). Organizations must adopt technology-driven solutions and performance management strategies to mitigate these challenges (Davenport & Ronanki, 2023). While FWAs may contribute to enhanced employee performance, their success depends on proper organizational support, precise performance metrics, and practical virtual collaboration tools (Tavar

B. Hypothesis Development

H₁: Flexible work arrangements significantly enhanced Sterling Global Call Center Inc. employee engagement.

H₂: Flexible work arrangements positively influenced employee retention.

H₃: Flexible work arrangements improved employee productivity in the call center context.

H₄: There is a statistically significant relationship between employees' demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, education level, job level, family status) and their perceptions of flexible work arrangements (FWAs).

H_{5a}: Employees' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of flexible work arrangements differed significantly based on their demographic characteristics.

H_{5b}: Flexible work arrangements led to a significant improvement in work-life balance perceptions among employees.

III. METHOD

A. Research Design

This study adopted a convergent mixed-methods research design to comprehensively examine the multidimensional effects of Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) on employee engagement, retention, and productivity. This approach integrated

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quantitative and qualitative methods, enabling a robust and nuanced research problem analysis. The mixed-methods approach was selected due to its capacity to merge measurable data with contextual insights, addressing both breadth and depth in understanding the phenomenon (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

B. Participants

The target population for this study consisted of 1,000 employees from Sterling Global Call Center Inc., encompassing a range of roles such as customer support representatives, team leaders, and administrative staff. These employees could participate if they had engaged in flexible work arrangements (FWAs) for at least three months. A sample size of 286 employees was determined as the minimum necessary to achieve a 95% confidence level with a 5% error margin, ensuring statistical robustness and practical feasibility in data collection.

Sterling Global Call Center Inc. was selected for this study due to its large and diverse workforce, which provides a comprehensive perspective on employees' experiences in a call center environment. The company has implemented flexible work policies, making it an ideal setting to explore the impact of FWAs on employee satisfaction and performance. The research was conducted at the company's main office and associated operational branches, chosen to reflect various employee experiences across different operational contexts. These locations represented the company's overall workforce, offering a well-rounded view of the implementation and outcomes of FWAs in different work settings.

C. Research Instruments

The researcher developed two key instruments for this study to evaluate flexible work arrangements (FWAs): a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interview guides. The survey, designed to assess employees' perceptions of FWAs quantitatively, was based on established frameworks, such as those by Kossek and Thompson (2016). It used a 5-point Likert scale to measure satisfaction, accessibility, engagement, retention, and productivity. A pilot test with 30 participants confirmed the instrument's reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89), ensuring clarity and consistency—the semi-structured interview guide aimed to explore employees' in-depth experiences with FWAs. Open-ended questions focused on perceived benefits, challenges, and suggestions for improvement. Pre-testing with five employees and expert review refined the guide. The interviews were conducted comfortably, lasting 30–45 minutes each, providing qualitative insights that complemented the survey data. Both instruments were carefully designed to align with the study's objectives and ensure comprehensive data collection.

D. Data Analysis

For quantitative data analysis, descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent demographics and survey responses, including central tendency (mean) and variability (standard deviation) measures. Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analyses examined relationships between FWAs and employee engagement, retention, and productivity, with statistical significance set at $p < 0.05$. Statistical software like SPSS or R was used for analysis.

Qualitative data was analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. The process included familiarization with data, generating codes, identifying themes, and refining them for coherence. Themes were illustrated with direct quotes. NVivo or MAXQDA software was used to organize and visualize the data. Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data enhanced the study's validity and depth.

IV. RESULTS

Table 1. Profile of Respondents

Demographics	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	20-29 years	115	39.79%
	30-39 years	87	30.10%
	40-49 years	62	21.45%
	50 years and above	25	8.65%
Gender	Male	153	52.94%
	Female	136	47.06%
Educational Attainment	High School Diploma	38	13.15%
	Bachelor's Degree	185	64.01%
	Postgraduate Degree	66	22.84%
Family Status	Single	142	49.13%
	Married	102	35.29%
	With Dependents	45	15.58

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Job Level	Entry-level	162	56.06%
	Mid-level	104	35.99%
	Senior-level	23	7.96%
	Less than 1 year	52	17.99%
	1-3 years	124	42.91%
	4-6 years	76	26.30%
	More than 6 years	37	12.80%
	Customer Service Representative	162	56.06%
	Team Leader	74	25.61%
	Manager	34	11.76%
	Other	19	6.57%

Table 2. Impact of Flexible Work Arrangements on Employee Engagement (H₁)

Flexible Work Arrangement	Mean Engagement Score	Standard Deviation
Telecommuting	4.25	0.85
Flexible Scheduling	4.10	0.90
Job Sharing	3.95	0.88
Hybrid Setup	4.30	0.80
Shifting Schedules	3.85	0.92

The findings indicate that engagement was highest in hybrid ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.80$) and telecommuting ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.85$) setups, suggesting these arrangements effectively foster employee engagement. In contrast, shifting schedules reported the lowest engagement ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.92$), likely due to the disruptions caused by irregular work hours. Qualitative insights reinforced these results, with hybrid employees appreciating the balance between autonomy and team interactions, while those on shifting schedules expressed disengagement due to unpredictable routines. These findings align with Schaufeli (2021) and Allen et al. (2020), highlighting that flexibility enhances engagement by reducing stress and promoting autonomy. Overall, FWAs, particularly hybrid and telecommuting models, significantly improve engagement, confirming H₁.

Table 3. Relationship between FWAs and Employee Retention (H₂)

Flexible Work Arrangement	Correlation Coefficient (r)
Telecommuting	0.58
Flexible Scheduling	0.53
Job Sharing	0.42
Hybrid Setup	0.61
Shifting Schedules	0.35

A correlational analysis revealed strong positive relationships between hybrid setups ($r = 0.61$) and telecommuting ($r = 0.58$) with employee retention, indicating that flexible work options encourage long-term commitment. In contrast, shifting schedules showed the weakest correlation ($r = 0.35$), suggesting irregular hours may contribute to higher turnover. Qualitative insights reinforced these findings, with employees citing reduced commuting stress and excellent work-life balance as key retention factors. Long-tenured employees highlighted how FWAs mitigated burnout, strengthening their organizational commitment. These results align with Galanti et al. (2021) and Campbell (2021), who emphasize FWAs as a strategic tool for improving employee loyalty. Overall, FWAs significantly enhanced retention by reducing stress and accommodating personal needs, validating H₂.

Table 4. Impact of FWA on Employee Productivity (H₃)

Flexible Work Arrangement	Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Telecommuting	0.42	0.08	5.25	<0.001
Flexible Scheduling	0.35	0.09	3.89	<0.001

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Job Sharing	0.28	0.10	2.80	0.005
Hybrid Setup	0.45	0.07	6.43	<0.001
Shifting Schedules	0.20	0.00	1.82	0.070

Regression analysis revealed that hybrid setups ($B = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$) and telecommuting ($B = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$) had the most substantial positive impact on productivity, followed by flexible scheduling ($B = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$) and job sharing ($B = 0.28$, $p = 0.005$). Shifting schedules ($B = 0.20$, $p = 0.070$) showed the weakest and non-significant effect, suggesting inconsistent hours may hinder productivity. Qualitative insights reinforced these findings, with employees citing fewer distractions in hybrid and telecommuting setups, while those on shifting schedules struggled with maintaining consistency. These results align with Choudhury et al. (2021) and Shockley et al. (2021), who found that FWAs enhance productivity by reducing workplace interruptions and accommodating individual work patterns. The study supports H_3 , demonstrating that FWAs significantly improve productivity by fostering focused and flexible work environments.

Table 5. Influence of Demographics on Perceptions of FWA (H_4)

Demographics	Category	Positive Perception (%)	Neutral Perception (%)	Negative Perception (%)
Age	20-29 years	76	15	9
	30-39 years	62	25	13
	40-49 years	50	32	18
	50 years and above	42	34	24
Gender	Male	66	24	10
	Female	71	21	8
Educational Attainment	High School Diploma	52	31	17
	Bachelor's Degree	73	20	7
	Postgraduate Degree	81	14	5
Family Status	Single	65	25	10
	Married	78	16	6
	With Dependents	82	12	6
Job Level	Entry-level	62	28	10
	Mid-level	72	19	9
	Senior-level	82	12	6
Length of Employment	Less than 1 year	58	30	12
	1-3 years	68	22	10
	4-6 years	74	16	10
	More than 6 years	84	12	4
Role/Designation	Customer Service Representative	66	22	12
	Team Lead	78	14	8
	Manager	85	10	5
	Other	60	25	15

Quantitative findings revealed that women (71%) and employees with caregiving responsibilities (82%) reported higher satisfaction with FWAs. Younger employees (20–29 years) had the most positive perception (76%), while older employees (50+) were more reserved (42%). Higher educational attainment correlated with greater appreciation (81% for postgraduate degree holders) and longer tenure increased positivity (84% for employees with 6+ years). Managers (85%) and senior employees viewed FWAs more favorably than entry-level workers. Qualitative insights reinforced these patterns, with women valuing FWAs for work-life balance and entry-level employees preferring hybrid setups for career growth. These findings align with Galanti et al. (2021) and Shockley et al. (2021), who emphasized how demographic factors influence FWA perceptions. Overall, the study confirms H_4 , highlighting the need for inclusive FWA strategies to accommodate diverse workforce needs, as Kossek and Thompson (2016) supported.

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Table 6. Benefits and Challenges of Implementing FWA (H5a)

Category	Percentage
Improved Well-Being	82%
Job Satisfaction	78%
Reduced Stress	85%
Communication Barriers	48%
Blurred Work-Life Boundaries	41%

Survey findings highlighted that FWAs significantly improved well-being (82%), reduced stress (85%), and enhanced job satisfaction (78%), while challenges included communication barriers (48%) and blurred work-life boundaries (41%). Qualitative insights reinforced these results, with employees citing reduced stress and greater control over their schedules but also noting difficulties in collaboration. These findings align with Kossek and Thompson (2016) and Batt and Colvin (2021), who emphasized the importance of structured policies to maximize benefits while mitigating coordination challenges. Overall, the study confirms H_{5a}, demonstrating that FWAs offer substantial advantages but require effective management strategies for successful implementation.

Table 7. Impact of FWA on Work-Life Balance (H5b)

Metric	Pre-FWA	Post-FWA	Difference	Statistical Test	Significance (p-value)
Average Work-Life Balance Score	3.4	4.2	+0.8	Paired Sample t-Test	<0.001

The paired sample t-test revealed a significant improvement in work-life balance after implementing FWAs, with scores increasing by 0.8 points (from 3.4 to 4.2, $t = 3.89$, $p < 0.001$). Hybrid setups and telecommuting had the most notable positive impacts. Qualitative insights highlighted how FWAs enhanced family time, with employees reporting better work-life integration, such as having more time for family activities. These findings align with Galanti et al. (2021) and Shockley et al. (2021), who emphasized that FWAs improve work-life balance by allowing employees to prioritize personal commitments. Overall, the study supports H_{5b}, reinforcing the critical role of flexibility in promoting employee well-being.

V. DISCUSSION

H₁: The impact of FWAs on employee engagement (H₁) showed that hybrid and telecommuting arrangements resulted in the highest engagement scores, driven by increased autonomy and reduced stress. This aligns with Schaufeli (2021), who emphasized the importance of flexible schedules in boosting commitment and enthusiasm. In contrast, the lower engagement scores for shifting schedules reflect the findings of Batt and Colvin (2021), who noted the adverse effects of irregular work patterns on employee engagement.

H₂: Employees with access to FWAs, especially hybrid and telecommuting models, showed higher retention rates due to improved work-life integration. This supports Campbell (2021), who found that flexibility reduces turnover by addressing dissatisfaction drivers like long commutes and rigid schedules.

H₃: The findings align with Choudhury et al. (2021), who noted that telecommuting and hybrid models enhance productivity by minimizing workplace distractions. Employees highlighted the advantage of working during their most productive hours.

H₄: Women and caregivers reported greater satisfaction with FWAs, as they allowed for better work-life balance, consistent with Galanti et al. (2021). Younger employees favored hybrid arrangements for professional development, aligning with Choudhury et al. (2021), who noted that flexibility fosters career growth. These findings emphasize the importance of tailoring FWAs to meet diverse workforce needs.

H_{5a}: Top benefits included improved well-being, job satisfaction, and stress reduction, echoing Kossek and Thompson (2016). However, challenges such as communication barriers and blurred work-life boundaries reaffirmed Batt and Colvin's (2021) call for structured implementation to address operational issues.

H_{5b}: The significant improvement in work-life balance scores aligns with Shockley et al. (2021), highlighting the role of FWAs in enhancing employee well-being. This study reinforces that flexibility supports personal and professional harmony, especially for caregivers.

VI. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study underscored the transformative potential of Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) in addressing critical organizational challenges within Sterling Global Call Center Inc. and the broader business process outsourcing (BPO) industry. By enhancing employee engagement, retention, productivity, and work-life balance, FWAs proved viable strategies for fostering a sustainable and supportive workplace.

This research reaffirmed the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), demonstrating that FWAs acted as essential job resources, mitigating stressors and enhancing well-being. Hybrid and telecommuting models emerged as the most effective arrangements, balancing autonomy, collaboration, and flexibility. However, the study also revealed operational challenges, such as communication barriers and blurred work-life boundaries, emphasizing the need for structured policies and technological support.

The study's insights extended beyond Sterling Global Call Center Inc., contributing to the growing literature on workplace flexibility. It highlighted the importance of tailoring FWAs to accommodate diverse employee demographics and aligning organizational policies with emerging workforce needs.

In the rapidly evolving work landscape, FWAs were no longer a luxury but a necessity for organizations striving to attract and retain top talent. As businesses faced increasing pressure to adapt to employee expectations, technological advancements, and global challenges, FWAs offered a pathway to resilience, innovation, and sustainable growth.

The call for action was clear: Organizations needed to embrace flexibility as a cornerstone of modern workforce management, investing in solutions prioritizing employee well-being while driving organizational performance. By doing so, they could create a future of work that was inclusive, equitable, and adaptable, benefiting both employees and employers in a dynamic and competitive world.

VII. LIMITATIONS

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of flexible work arrangements (FWAs), several limitations should be noted. First, the research was conducted within a single organization, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other industries or regions. The results may be influenced by the specific organizational culture and policies of Sterling Global Call Center Inc. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data, which can be subject to biases such as social desirability or respondent misinterpretation. While the sample size was statistically adequate, it may not capture the full diversity of employee experiences across various demographic groups. Furthermore, the study focused on the immediate effects of FWAs without accounting for long-term outcomes or potential shifts in employee perceptions over time. Lastly, the study concentrated on employee perceptions. It did not directly measure organizational performance or productivity, which could offer a more Comprehensive view of the impact of FWAs on business outcomes. The study's scope is confined to Sterling Global Call Center Inc. It does not claim to generalize findings across the entire BPO industry or other sectors, as external factors such as economic conditions, industry trends, and organizational changes may have influenced the results. Future research should consider longitudinal studies across different periods and organizational settings to further validate the findings and explore the long-term effects of FWAs on employee performance and retention.

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