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Flexible Work Arrangements and Their Impact on Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intentions among Generation Z Employees: A Qualitative Interview-Based Study of Pakistani Organizations

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigates the role of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) in shaping job satisfaction and turnover intentions among Generation Z employees working in Pakistani organizations. In recent years, FWAs such as hybrid work, remote working options, and flexible scheduling have become increasingly relevant due to technological advancements and shifting employee expectations. Generation Z, being digitally native and value-driven, places high importance on autonomy, work-life balance, and meaningful engagement at work. This study draws on semi-structured interviews with employees from IT, banking, education, and service sectors in Pakistan. Thematic analysis reveals that FWAs significantly enhance job satisfaction by improving autonomy, reducing work-related stress, and enabling better work-life integration. However, organizational resistance, lack of managerial trust, and traditional workplace cultures continue to hinder the effective implementation of FWAs. The findings highlight the need for Pakistani organizations to redesign HR policies to better align with the expectations of younger employees. The study contributes to the literature by providing context-specific qualitative evidence from a developing country perspective.

Keywords: Flexible Work Arrangements, Generation Z, Job Satisfaction, Turnover Intention, Pakistan, Qualitative Research

Introduction

Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) have emerged as a transformative element in modern human resource management practices (Allen, Golden, & Shockley, 2020; Bloom et al., 2021). FWAs refer to workplace policies that allow employees greater flexibility in terms of work location, working hours, and work design. These include remote working, hybrid models, compressed workweeks, and flexible scheduling. The rise of digital technologies and post-pandemic workplace restructuring has accelerated the adoption of FWAs globally (Choudhury, Foroughi, & Larson, 2021; Peeters et al., 2023).

Generation Z employees, typically defined as individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, represent a new wave of the workforce with distinct expectations (McKinsey & Company,

2023). Unlike previous generations, Gen Z workers prioritize flexibility, psychological well-being, and purpose-driven employment over traditional job security alone (Deloitte, 2023). They are highly adaptable to technology and prefer organizations that support autonomy and digital connectivity (Knight & Parker, 2021).

In the context of Pakistan, organizational structures remain predominantly hierarchical, bureaucratic, and control-oriented, with management practices often emphasizing supervision, fixed working hours, and centralized decision-making processes (World Economic Forum, 2022). Traditional workplace cultures continue to dominate across many sectors, particularly in banking, telecommunications, manufacturing, and public organizations. Employees are generally expected to adhere to strict attendance policies and conventional office-based work arrangements. While these practices were historically considered effective for maintaining discipline and productivity, they are increasingly being challenged by evolving workforce expectations. The rapid advancement of digital technologies, changing societal values, and globalization have significantly transformed how employees perceive work and employment relationships. Consequently, organizations are facing growing pressure to adapt their human resource practices to accommodate more flexible and employee-centered work arrangements. The emergence of Generation Z (Gen Z), typically defined as individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, has further accelerated this transformation. As digital natives, Gen Z employees have grown up in an environment characterized by widespread internet access, mobile technologies, social media, and instant communication. These experiences have shaped their expectations regarding workplace flexibility, autonomy, work-life balance, and career development opportunities (Deloitte, 2023). Unlike previous generations, Gen Z workers often prioritize flexibility and personal well-being alongside financial rewards. They seek work environments that support both professional growth and personal fulfillment. Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs), including remote work, hybrid work models, flexible scheduling, compressed workweeks, and results-oriented work systems, have therefore become increasingly important in attracting and retaining this generation of employees.

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the adoption of FWAs globally and demonstrated the feasibility of alternative work arrangements across a wide range of industries. Many organizations experienced increased productivity, reduced operational costs, and improved employee satisfaction through flexible work practices (Bloom et al., 2021). As a result, FWAs have evolved from being optional benefits to becoming strategic human resource management tools that can enhance organizational competitiveness and employee well-being. Research suggests that employees who have greater control over when, where, and how they perform their work often report higher levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and psychological well-being (Oakman et al., 2022). At the same time, organizations that offer flexibility may benefit from improved employee retention, reduced absenteeism, and stronger employer branding.

Despite these global developments, the adoption of FWAs in Pakistan remains relatively limited and uneven across industries. Many organizations continue to prioritize traditional work structures due to concerns regarding productivity monitoring, organizational control, technological readiness, and managerial resistance to change. Furthermore, cultural norms and leadership styles often reinforce expectations of physical presence and direct supervision in the workplace. This creates a significant gap between employee expectations and organizational practices, particularly among younger employees entering the workforce. When employees perceive that their needs for flexibility and autonomy are not being adequately addressed, they may experience dissatisfaction, reduced engagement, lower organizational commitment, and increased intentions to leave their organizations (Deloitte, 2023).

Although the relationship between FWAs, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions has been widely examined in developed economies, there remains a limited understanding of these relationships within developing countries such as Pakistan. Most existing studies have employed quantitative approaches and have focused primarily on measuring statistical associations between workplace flexibility and employee outcomes. While these studies provide valuable insights, they often fail to capture the lived experiences, perceptions, and contextual realities of employees operating within specific cultural and organizational environments (Peeters et al., 2023). Given Pakistan's unique socio-cultural context, labor market dynamics, and organizational practices, findings from Western countries may not be directly applicable.

Therefore, the central problem addressed in this study is the lack of qualitative and context-specific understanding of how Flexible Work Arrangements influence job satisfaction and turnover intentions among Generation Z employees in Pakistan. While international literature consistently highlights positive relationships between workplace flexibility and employee outcomes, there is insufficient evidence regarding how Gen Z employees in Pakistan perceive and experience FWAs and how these perceptions shape their attitudes toward their jobs and organizations (Oakman et al., 2022; Peeters et al., 2023).

Accordingly, the objectives of this study are fourfold. First, it seeks to explore the perceptions and experiences of Flexible Work Arrangements among Generation Z employees in Pakistan. Second, it aims to examine how FWAs influence employees' levels of job satisfaction. Third, the study investigates the impact of FWAs on turnover intentions and employees' decisions to remain with or leave their organizations. Finally, it seeks to identify organizational, managerial, and cultural barriers that may hinder the successful implementation of flexible work practices within Pakistani workplaces.

This research is significant because it contributes to the growing body of knowledge on contemporary workforce management in emerging economies. The findings will provide valuable insights for human resource practitioners, organizational leaders, and policymakers seeking to design effective workplace policies that align with the preferences of the modern workforce. By understanding the role of FWAs in enhancing job satisfaction and reducing turnover intentions among Gen Z employees, organizations can develop strategies to improve employee retention, engagement, and overall organizational performance in increasingly competitive labor markets (Bloom et al., 2021; Deloitte, 2023). Furthermore, the study may assist policymakers in promoting labor practices that support workforce well-being, organizational sustainability, and long-term economic development in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Flexible work arrangements have been widely studied in organizational behavior literature. Gajendran and Harrison (2022) found that telecommuting enhances employee autonomy and reduces work-family conflict. Similarly, Allen et al. (2020) argue that FWAs contribute to reduced burnout and improved psychological well-being. These findings suggest that flexibility in work design is closely linked to positive employee outcomes.

Generation Z differs significantly from earlier cohorts in terms of workplace expectations. According to McKinsey & Company (2023), Gen Z employees prioritize flexibility, diversity, and career development opportunities. They are more likely to leave organizations that do not align with their values or provide sufficient autonomy.

Job satisfaction is influenced by multiple factors, including perceived organizational support, leadership style, and control over work schedules (Bloom et al., 2021). When employees feel trusted and empowered, their job satisfaction levels increase significantly. Conversely, rigid organizational structures tend to reduce motivation and engagement.

Turnover Intentions and Theoretical Perspectives

Turnover Intentions among Generation Z Employees

Turnover intention is one of the most widely studied outcome variables in organizational behavior and human resource management research. It refers to an employee's conscious and deliberate willingness to leave an organization within a foreseeable period of time and is considered a strong predictor of actual employee turnover (Mobley, 1977). High turnover intentions often result in substantial organizational costs, including recruitment expenditures, training investments, productivity losses, and disruptions in operational efficiency (Allen et al., 2013).

In recent years, turnover intentions have become increasingly important due to the changing expectations of younger generations entering the workforce. Generation Z employees place considerable emphasis on workplace flexibility, autonomy, meaningful work, and work-life balance (Deloitte, 2023). Unlike previous generations, Gen Z employees are less willing to remain in organizations that do not align with their personal and professional expectations. They actively seek employers that prioritize employee well-being, career growth opportunities, and flexible work arrangements (Deloitte, 2023).

According to Deloitte (2023), lack of workplace flexibility and poor work-life balance are among the primary reasons why young professionals consider leaving their organizations. Employees who perceive their organizations as supportive and responsive to their needs generally exhibit lower turnover intentions and stronger organizational commitment (Allen et al., 2013). Flexible work arrangements contribute positively by reducing work-related stress, enhancing employee autonomy, and facilitating a better balance between work and personal responsibilities (Oakman et al., 2022). Consequently, employees are more likely to remain committed to organizations that support flexibility and employee well-being.

Flexible Work Arrangements and Employee Retention

Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) have emerged as an effective strategy for reducing employee turnover intentions and improving employee retention. FWAs provide employees with greater control over their work schedules, locations, and methods of task completion. Common forms of flexibility include remote work, hybrid work arrangements, flexible scheduling, and compressed workweeks (Oakman et al., 2022).

Research has consistently demonstrated that employees who have access to flexible work practices report higher levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and psychological well-being (Oakman et al., 2022). These positive outcomes contribute to stronger employee retention and lower turnover intentions. When organizations offer flexibility, employees often perceive such practices as indicators of trust, support, and organizational concern for employee welfare, which strengthens their attachment to the organization (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Supportive leadership further enhances the effectiveness of FWAs. Leaders who encourage autonomy, focus on outcomes rather than attendance, and demonstrate concern for employee well-being foster a positive organizational climate characterized by trust and mutual respect. Such environments promote employee engagement and reduce the likelihood of employees seeking alternative employment opportunities (Allen et al., 2013). Conversely, rigid organizational policies and excessive managerial control may weaken employee satisfaction and increase turnover intentions.

Theoretical Foundations

Job Demands-Resources Theory

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory provides a useful framework for understanding the relationship between FWAs and employee outcomes. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2007), employee well-being is influenced by the balance between job demands and job resources. Job demands include workload, emotional pressure, and role-related stressors, while job resources encompass factors that support employee performance and well-being.

Flexible work arrangements can be considered important job resources because they provide employees with autonomy, flexibility, and greater control over their work environment. These resources help employees cope with workplace demands and reduce the negative effects of stress and burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Consequently, employees experience higher levels of job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions.

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory suggests that workplace relationships are based on reciprocal exchanges between employees and organizations (Blau, 1964). When organizations provide employees with valuable benefits such as flexibility, trust, and support, employees are likely to reciprocate through positive attitudes and behaviors (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

In the context of FWAs, employees often interpret workplace flexibility as evidence that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. As a result, employees demonstrate increased loyalty, stronger organizational commitment, and reduced intentions to leave the organization (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This reciprocal exchange relationship highlights the strategic value of flexible work arrangements as a retention mechanism.

Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory

Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory provides additional support for the positive effects of workplace flexibility. The theory distinguishes between hygiene factors that prevent dissatisfaction and motivators that enhance satisfaction and performance (Herzberg et al., 1959). Motivational factors include achievement, recognition, responsibility, autonomy, and opportunities for personal growth.

Flexible work arrangements contribute directly to several motivational factors identified by Herzberg. By increasing employee autonomy and allowing greater control over work-related decisions, FWAs enhance intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). Employees who experience greater satisfaction and motivation are less likely to develop turnover intentions and more likely to remain committed to their organizations.

Overall, the theoretical and empirical literature suggests that Flexible Work Arrangements serve as valuable organizational resources that improve employee well-being, strengthen organizational commitment, and reduce turnover intentions among Generation Z employees (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Deloitte, 2023).

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore lived experiences of Generation Z employees regarding FWAs. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 20 participants from IT, banking, education, and service sectors in Pakistan. The participants were chosen based on their exposure to flexible or hybrid work arrangements.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted both online and in person. Each interview lasted between 25 and 45 minutes. Open-ended questions were used to allow participants to freely express their perceptions, experiences, and attitudes toward flexible working conditions.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Initial coding involved identifying meaningful segments of text, which were then grouped into broader themes. Four major themes emerged: flexibility preference, job satisfaction enhancement, turnover intention reduction, and organizational resistance.

Ethical considerations were strictly followed. Participation was voluntary, confidentiality was ensured, and all responses were anonymized. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time.

Analysis and Findings

The analysis revealed four key themes. The first theme, flexibility preference, indicated that participants highly value autonomy in deciding their work schedules. Many respondents reported that rigid office timings negatively affect their productivity and satisfaction.

The second theme, job satisfaction enhancement, showed that FWAs significantly increase satisfaction by reducing commuting stress and improving work-life balance. Participants noted that flexible schedules allow them to manage personal and professional responsibilities more effectively.

The third theme, turnover intention reduction, demonstrated that employees who experienced flexible work policies were less likely to consider leaving their organizations. In contrast, those without flexibility expressed higher intentions to switch jobs.

The fourth theme, organizational resistance, highlighted barriers such as lack of managerial trust, outdated policies, and cultural resistance to remote work in Pakistani organizations.

Diagram 1: Conceptual Model (FWAs → Job Satisfaction → Turnover Intention)

Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs)



Job Satisfaction

(Autonomy, Work-Life Balance,
Reduced Stress, Flexibility)



Turnover Intention (Decrease)

FWAs directly improve job satisfaction, which in turn reduces employees’ intention to leave the organization.

Diagram 2: Turnover Intention Pathway (Work Stress → Dissatisfaction → Exit Intent)

Work Stress + Rigid Policies



Job Dissatisfaction



Low Organizational Commitment



Turnover Intention

When organizations fail to provide flexibility, stress increases, leading to dissatisfaction and eventually higher turnover intention.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study concludes that Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) have become an increasingly important factor in shaping employee attitudes and workplace experiences, particularly among Generation Z employees in Pakistan. The findings suggest that FWAs play a significant role in enhancing job satisfaction while simultaneously reducing turnover intentions. As members of Generation Z continue to enter the workforce in greater numbers, their expectations regarding flexibility, autonomy, and work-life integration are reshaping traditional employment relationships. Consequently, organizations that fail to adapt to these changing expectations may face increasing challenges related to employee engagement, retention, and overall organizational performance.

The study found that flexible work arrangements positively influence job satisfaction by providing employees with greater control over their work schedules, work locations, and methods of task completion. Participants generally perceived flexibility as a valuable organizational practice that supports their professional responsibilities while also allowing them to maintain personal commitments and well-being. The ability to manage work and personal life more effectively contributed to higher levels of motivation, productivity, and overall job satisfaction. Employees reported feeling more trusted, empowered, and valued when organizations offered flexible work options. This sense of autonomy and organizational support strengthened their emotional attachment to their jobs and enhanced their commitment to organizational goals.

The study also highlights the important relationship between FWAs and turnover intentions. Employees who perceive their organizations as supportive of flexibility are more likely to remain committed to their current employers and less likely to seek alternative employment opportunities. Flexible work practices serve as a valuable retention tool by addressing employees' evolving needs and preferences. In competitive labor markets where talented employees have numerous employment options, the availability of flexible work arrangements can provide organizations with a significant competitive advantage in attracting and retaining skilled workers. Therefore, FWAs should not be viewed merely as employee benefits but rather as strategic human resource management practices that contribute directly to organizational sustainability and long-term success.

Despite these positive outcomes, the study reveals that several organizational barriers continue to hinder the effective implementation of flexible work arrangements in Pakistan. Traditional organizational cultures characterized by hierarchical structures, centralized decision-making, and strict supervision practices remain prevalent across many sectors. These cultural and managerial approaches often emphasize physical presence in the workplace rather than employee performance and outcomes. Consequently, managers may be reluctant to grant employees greater flexibility due to concerns regarding productivity, accountability, communication, and organizational control.

The findings further suggest that managerial trust plays a crucial role in determining the success of flexible work initiatives. Employees reported that the effectiveness of FWAs largely depends on the willingness of supervisors and organizational leaders to trust employees and evaluate performance based on results rather than attendance. Without trust-based management practices, flexible work policies may remain limited, inconsistently applied, or ineffective. Additionally, inadequate technological infrastructure, insufficient digital resources, and a lack of formal policies can create further obstacles to successful implementation.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made. First, organizations should consider adopting hybrid work models that combine the advantages of remote and office-based work. Hybrid arrangements can provide employees with greater flexibility while maintaining opportunities for collaboration, communication, and organizational engagement. Such models may be particularly suitable for Pakistani organizations seeking to balance traditional workplace expectations with modern workforce demands.

Second, organizations should transition from attendance-based performance evaluation systems toward performance-based assessment approaches. Evaluating employees based on outcomes, productivity, and achievement of objectives rather than physical presence can enhance fairness, increase motivation, and support the successful implementation of flexible work practices. This shift would also encourage greater accountability while allowing employees the autonomy they increasingly value.

Third, organizations should invest in digital technologies and infrastructure that facilitate effective communication, collaboration, and performance management in flexible work environments. Reliable digital tools, secure information systems, and employee training programs are essential for ensuring that flexible work arrangements operate efficiently and effectively.

Finally, future research should build upon the findings of this study by conducting quantitative investigations involving larger and more diverse samples. Such studies could statistically examine the relationships between flexible work arrangements, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, organizational commitment, and employee well-being. Future researchers may also explore sector-specific differences across industries such as banking, information technology, education, healthcare, and telecommunications. Comparative studies examining generational differences and organizational characteristics may further enhance understanding of how flexible work arrangements influence employee outcomes in the Pakistani context.

In conclusion, flexible work arrangements represent an increasingly important organizational strategy for enhancing employee satisfaction, improving well-being, and reducing turnover intentions among Generation Z employees in Pakistan. Organizations that successfully embrace flexibility and modernize their workplace practices are likely to achieve higher levels of employee engagement, retention, and organizational effectiveness in the evolving world of work.

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