



Exploring the Impact of Work Arrangements on Employee Well-being in the Post-Pandemic Workplace: The Role of Perceived Flexibility, Work-Life Balance, and Managerial Support

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this research was to understand the impact of different work arrangements (e.g. remote, hybrid, or on-premise) on employee well-being, considering the changes brought about by the pandemic. The study utilized a large sample of white-collar employees, with a focus on the mediating role of perceived flexibility and the moderating effect of managerial support in the relationship between work arrangements and employee well-being. As companies currently (re-)design their work arrangements there is a lot of insecurity on how especially remote and hybrid work influences the workforce and some companies are caught in a zig-zag course of overhauling their policies. Our findings suggest that employee well-being is mediated by location flexibility and work-life balance. However, the study also reveals challenges faced by remote workers, as the intense telecommuting was associated with lower employee well-being. The study also emphasizes the major role of managerial support in promoting employee well-being.

KEYWORDS: *Hybrid Work, Remote Work, Work from home, Employee Wellbeing, Managerial Support, Work Arrangements, Work-Life-Balance*

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic has been the accelerating force in altering the way we work and making flexible work arrangements a particularly interesting area of research in recent years. According to Eurostat, between five and six percent of employed people worked in some form of location-flexible work arrangement before the pandemic (Eurostat, 2020). This figure has been constant for a decade, until it saw a significant rise during the pandemic, with by now 13.5% of employees working from home (Eurostat 2022). Nowadays, we can see a rise in the popularity and desirability of flexible work arrangements with one in four people reporting they would quit if the possibility of working remotely was no longer an option (Owl Labs, 2021). Only a year after the pandemic started, studies like this have shown that working remotely has become an unnegotiable requirement when applying for a job. Within this context, the term of work flexibility has also extended from where the work is being completed, to when the work is being done (Owl Labs, 2021). Employees have experienced the benefits of having more autonomy over their schedule, resulting in enhanced work-life balance (WLB) (Boccoli et al., 2022).

Concurrently, there has been a notable increase in employee productivity across diverse metrics. However, hybrid work models and especially remote work models are often accompanied by concerns from management that performance is decreasing (Work Trend Index, 2022). Therefore, it remains

important to emphasize the significant trust deficit among managers regarding employee performance, even within hybrid frameworks. Also, this leads to a big insecurity in the way companies handle their work model strategy. Particularly 2023 has seen quite erratic changes in the way corporations define and communicate their hybrid and remote policies. The most prominent example is Elon Musk who first very publicly called all employees of Twitter/X back to the office only to close most of the offices down completely only a few months later (Hutchinson, 2023). But also less “polarizing” top management teams seem to change their work arrangement on the fly, with e.g. German technology corporation Bosch very suddenly announcing a 50% back-to-office policy in the summer of 2023 while Germany’s second-largest bank, the Commerzbank, announced in November of 2023 that they will terminate their 50% mandatory office time policy in 2024 (Kröner, 2023) and therefor suddenly increasing flexibility for employees.

As we transition into the post-pandemic workplace, it is essential to examine how these work arrangements impact individuals as well as organizations as a whole. Thus, this study seeks to contribute to our understanding of the evolving nature of work and its implications for employee well-being. While the work model’s impact on performance seems to be at the centre of research so far this study takes a different approach doing a deep dive into the individual’s perception of freedom (of location and schedule) in his or her work model as well as this perceived



flexibilities impact on employee well-being, work-life-balance, and perceived stress. Additionally, the goal is to educate employers on effective practices for maintaining a healthy work environment by a thorough assessment of existing research and quantitative interpretation of survey results.

Work Arrangements in the Age of Technology and COVID-19

Employee well-being (EWB) has been the subject of an expanding field of research in management and psychology (Wright & Cropanzano, 2004). More particularly, they have concentrated on the relationship between various work arrangements and EWB (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Given the growing significance of the design of work arrangements since the pandemic, it becomes imperative to dissect the transformative shifts that have emerged in recent times, altering the dynamics of office-centric professions, and leaving lasting changes in employee lifestyles and behaviors.

Previously, the standard work arrangements of knowledge workers consisted of straightforward rules: coming into work and exchanging their time for the monetary benefits of the job. This model has become increasingly challenging to maintain since it does not account for the huge digital transformation the knowledge work has undergone in the last decades (Herschel & Andrews, 1997). The more jobs relying on the internet and screens, the need for those jobs to be performed in a particular place and at a particular time started diminishing (Allen et al., 2015). Consequently, as telework became more widespread, the interest in its impact on employers and employees has grown.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, more changes in the workplace have been brought about and magnified. Both companies and employees had to suddenly adjust to the new way of working, away from the office, and towards bringing work home. This mandatory transition to work remotely has had a profound impact on EWB, with flexibility and WLB emerging as critical factors (Majewska, 2022; Becker et al., 2022). Due to the restrictive policies and uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, the employees' perception of work-from-home and onsite job structure was completely altered. In other words, before the pandemic, telecommuting has been seen to improve temporal flexibility and create more balance in employee's life (Lister & Harnish, 2014). On the other hand, the disruptive nature of mandatory work from home has taken away the perceived freedom that comes with its nature (Becker et al., 2022). It is difficult to make accurate predictions about the development of remote work based on this period because of the severe and drastic adjustments made in our daily routines, such as the sudden need for homeschooling, isolation, and emotional stresses such as anxiety and job uncertainty (World Health Organisation, 2020; Cullen et al., 2020).

Since the adjustment to the new way of working is seemingly here to stay, understanding the landscape of the post-pandemic work environment and its impact on EWB is essential for developing strategies to improve organizational outcomes

and employees' quality of life (Barrero et al., 2021). This literature review seeks to synthesize and critically evaluate existing research to gain a better understanding of the differences between the three arrangements and their prevalence in today's workforce, the effects they have on EWB through lenses of flexibility,

Flexibility and Working Arrangements

As suggested by self-determination theory, human well-being is highly dependent, amongst other factors, on satisfaction of psychological needs, one of which is the need for autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In other words, to perceive higher levels of well-being one must have control over their actions and choices. As our workplaces evolve, flexibility therefore has become a key concept in creating a positive work environment (Lund et al., 2020). Flexibility is referring to the ability to work from a different location, and at a time or schedule that is different from the traditional fixed 9-to-5 workday (Krasulja et al., 2015). According to Näswall et al. (2008), the transition to remote work and other forms of flexible work arrangements has underlined the relevance of flexibility in EWB even more. As previously noted, the increased usage of technology has played a significant part in promoting flexible job opportunities, allowing employees to move away from a fixed place of work (flexibility of location) as well as fixed working hours (flexibility of time).

The advantages employees benefit from workplace flexibility have been widely recognized and undeniable (Brownson, 2004). Lister and Harnish (2014) have found that the key benefit of remote work is increased flexibility that in return mitigates the stress levels of commuting to work and increases the feeling of trust and autonomy. In other words, employees who had greater flexibility over their schedules and place of work were more likely to report higher levels of well-being and job satisfaction. However, it is also important to note the negative implications flexible work arrangements might have on employees such as the strain that comes with the lack of routine, workplace relationships, and increased need for self-management (Sargent et al., 2020).

Work Life Balance and Working Arrangements

One of the dimensions of employee well-being indirectly influenced by remote work and flexibility is work-life balance. This area of well-being has been extensively studied, both before and during a pandemic.

The research before the pandemic has acknowledged both benefits and drawbacks remote work has on WLB with the positive outcomes of telework frequently outweighing the negative ones, such as interference of family with work or the feeling of always needing to be "online" (Lister & Harnish, 2014). Remote work has been associated with improved WLB as it allows employees to save time on commuting and have more control over their schedule and work environment (Krasulja et al., 2015). In addition to improved WLB, flexibility, and perceived control over scheduling have been found to lower work-family conflict associated with higher rates of remote work (Golden et al., 2006). However, it is also important to note that



these positive effects are not equal for all employees (Bellmann & Hübler, 2020). In their research, Bellman and Hübler have discovered a heterogeneous relationship between remote work and WLB. Namely, they have found that the effect of remote work on WLB is not the same for all employees and might depend on individual circumstances and reasons for working remotely, distinguishing between private and job-related interests in working remotely. One of the most notable interferences remote work has with WLB is the tendency to work longer hours, which can lead to “role blurring” (Glass & Noonan, 2016). This effect seems to have been increased due to lockdowns and restrictions. Many employees, regardless of their home capabilities, had no choice but to resort to home office. Consequently, this forced and abrupt transition impacted how remote work is seen in terms of its influence on WLB. Employees reported their WLB deteriorated, indicating the difficulty in separating work from personal life due to a lack of physical boundaries between their place of work and home (Van der Lippe et al. 2021; Jamal et al. 2021). A lack of employment resources and social support was also found to increase this negative relationship (Becker et al. 2022). However, longer exposure to remote work showed the ability of employees to adapt to new circumstances and being able to balance their work and private roles (Bellmann & Hübler).

Managerial Support and Working Arrangements

Creating flexibility in a work environment that results in desirable individual outcomes is not always easy to achieve in remote or hybrid working arrangements due to the reasons described in this chapter. Managers and managerial support (MS) have a pivotal role (Lister & Harnish, 2014). They are the ones facilitating and embodying successful flexible work arrangement strategies. Moreover, they are the ones creating a sense of inclusion for both online and offline teams. It has been found that defining expectations around work hours, availability, and deliverables, is imperative in simultaneously supporting flexibility while avoiding stress (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Golden et al., 2006). For employees to thrive in the workplace, managers should also provide valuable assistance by aiding in goal setting, prioritization, and offering feedback (Work Trend Index, 2021). This aspect gains added significance, especially when work is conducted outside the traditional office setting. Gajendran & Harrison (2007) have discovered that the role of managers should be to adopt a results-oriented mindset, as opposed to focusing on hours worked or time spent in the office.

Therefore, in the transition towards flexibility, businesses and employees must look more into the quality of work performed rather than quantity.

Additionally, managers should be the ones recognizing the needs and preferences of their employees. While many managers expect their employees to return to the office, the preference amongst workers differs significantly (Owl Labs, 2021). This sometimes not openly discussed discrepancy in expectations may be a leading cause for employee dissatisfaction and an environment of mistrust. Additionally, factors such as work

stress, computer monitoring, and organizational climate can also play a significant negative role in EWB (Becker et al., 2021). As such, organizations should strive to create work environments that support employee autonomy, balance between their personal and professional lives, and overall well-being, particularly in the context of remote and hybrid work arrangements (Lister & Harnish, 2014).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research question and research hypotheses

The present study intends to evaluate how motivational job characteristics such as perceived flexibility of place and schedule that were accentuated and altered in the light of COVID-19 influenced perceived well-being. By doing so, we will be concentrating on the job resources part of the job demands and resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Therefore, this study focuses on motivational job resources and their impact on EWB through the moderating effect of MS and WLB as a psychological mediator. Additionally, our concept structure is derived from the framework developed by Gajendran and Harrison (2007). This structure shows how telecommuting intensity can have a varying impact on individual outcomes, in this context well-being as well as strain on individuals induced by increased self-organization and need for stress management. Thus, the model we proposed is an amalgamated structure of key mediating and direct telecommuting effects on well-being. The direction from perceived flexibility to WLB helps us explain through which mechanisms and working arrangements impact EWB. More specifically, how through perceived flexibility, work arrangements impact WLB and thus in return, EWB as Jamal et al., (2021) and other scholars have found, perceived flexibility can lead to improved WLB. On the other hand, MS is considered a buffer variable, as postulated in H6, indicating the strength with which the independent variable impacts the dependent variable (Bakker et al., 2005). We investigate how these variables impact individual outcomes, both well-being and potential stress factors that result from increased flexibility. The following research question presents itself:

What impact do working arrangements have on employee well-being in the post-pandemic workplace and what role do flexibility, work-life balance, and managerial support play in achieving positive well-being?

With the COVID-19 pandemic suddenly imposing the change of working from home on most office workers, they had no choice but to adapt. This forced shift has shown that remote work is not only possible but it could work successfully (Barreo et al., 2021). Research during the pandemic has shown the benefits of remote work and flexibility have remained consistent, with some people’s sense of autonomy being hindered due to the forced nature of the implemented policies (Becker et al., 2022). Building on this, the following hypotheses are presented to assess how perceived flexibility in different work settings acts as a psychological mediator between work arrangements and employee well-being, and how these relationships have been impacted by the pandemic:



Hypothesis 1: Perceived flexibility in scheduling working hours mediates the relationship between working arrangements and employee wellbeing, such that high-intensity telecommuting leads to enhanced employee wellbeing through the mediating effect of scheduling flexibility

Hypothesis 2: Perceived flexibility in work location mediates the relationship between working arrangements and employee wellbeing, such that high-intensity telecommuting leads to enhanced employee wellbeing through the mediating effect of location flexibility

While RW can provide greater flexibility and positive outcomes such as EWB, it can also lead to job ambiguity, longer work hours, and social isolation. The surge in digital communication channels like messages, emails, and online meetings has led to an increase in collaborative interactions among individuals. However, this heightened connectivity can also potentially contribute to elevated stress levels, also called “digital stress” (Hefner & Vorderer, 2016). Moreover, this trend requires individuals to navigate decisions related to self-organizing their work environment and managing their time effectively, as the absence of a physical commute blurs the boundaries between work and personal life (Glass & Noonan, 2016; Sargent et al., 2020). These impacts on WLB require more investigation. While it seems obvious that more flexibility (of location and schedule) should have positive impacts on Work-Life balance and therefore well-being we could also face a paradox here in which the employee seeks more flexibility on the one hand but does not notice a tipping point after which more flexibility at the same time introduces more negative than positive effects, such as loneliness or digital stress.

Hypothesis 3: Perceived flexibility in work location mediates the relationship between working arrangements and employee wellbeing, such that high-intensity telecommuting leads to enhanced employee wellbeing through the mediating effect of location flexibility.

Hypothesis 4: The indirect relationship between working arrangements and employee well-being is mediated by the combined influence of flexibility of schedule and work-life balance.

Hypothesis 5: The indirect relationship between working arrangements and employee well-being is mediated by the combined influence of flexibility of location and work-life balance.

Simply providing flexible work arrangements is not enough to improve employee well-being, and creating a supportive organizational culture is crucial (Beauregard, 2011). Thus, the role of managers in implementing successful flexible work arrangements is of the highest significance. This study wants to identify how strongly managerial support influences employee well-being positively regardless of the working arrangements, therefore our hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 6: Managerial support influences employee well-being positively regardless of the working arrangement

Research setting, participants, and procedure

This study used an online survey, developed in soscisurvey.com. It was distributed through various channels such as email invitations, and social media platforms. The survey consisted of several sections and included a combination of Likert scale, open-ended questions, and multiple-choice questions. In the introduction of the survey, participants were presented with a confidentiality reassurance and a preliminary question: “Are you currently employed in a white-collar profession?”. The preliminary question assured that the participants stayed within the scope of the study. The study was active for the period 17th May to 26th May 2023.

Measures and scales

Control variables The survey contained several control variables to ensure all possible confounding factors are included that might influence the relationship between variables. Participants were asked for their age because it accounts for the career-life stage which can play a role in work-life balance segmentation preferences (Martins et al., 2002). Additionally, we controlled for gender (Male, Female) since it has been found that women may benefit from more temporal flexibility and reduction of work-family conflict (Fana, et al., 2020). Another control variable we accounted for was the difference between job functions (Intern/Working student, Trainee/Associate, Mid-level employee, People Manager, Senior Executive). Previous research has found that higher management roles perceive telecommuting intensity differently compared to entry-level positions (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). As also suggested by Bailey & Kurland (2002), we controlled for tenure to adjust for the need to adapt to different work arrangements.

Work arrangements and well-being measures to test our independent variable, we have asked participants to choose what their current working arrangement is, and what their working arrangement before and during the pandemic was. The answers were provided with a single choice question and were divided into four categories: Working exclusively from home/remotely, exclusively on-site at the company's physical office, Remote learning hybrid (20% of the time in the office, 80% of the time remote), Office leaning hybrid (80% of the time in the office, 20% of the time remote). Additionally, the participants were provided with definitions for each of the working arrangements to identify the working style more easily. The four categories were chosen to address differences that may come from different intensity hybrid models.

Well-being was measured with a question “How would you rate your overall well-being?” on a 5-point Likert scale (1-Very Poor, 5- Excellent) and “How would you rate your stress levels” (1-Very Stressed, 5-Not stressed at all). Additionally, participants were asked to rate their well-being improvement/decline (1- Much worse, 5- Much better) in comparison to before the pandemic “How would you rate your overall well-being now, compared to before the pandemic?”. Lastly, participants were able to assess their current WLB on a scale of 1- Very Poor to 5- Excellent.



Moderating and Mediating Variables

The questionnaire's next section focused on perceived flexibility, specifically perceived freedom in scheduling working hours and choosing work locations. This was accomplished using a 5-point Likert scale (1-Strongly Disagree, 5-Strongly Agree). Testing was done employing questions including "I have flexibility in choosing where to work." to test for H2 (Golden et al., 2006; Dua et al., 2022).

WLB was another moderating variable examined with an emphasis on its indirect influence on well-being. To begin with, participants could indicate the number of hours worked in a week (less than 20, 21-34 hours, 35-40 hours, 41-52 hours, or more than 53 hours). This was done to determine whether the employees worked more than the average contracted hours (EU Labour Force Survey, 2021). Furthermore, we asked respondents to what extent they agreed with phrases like "I am successful in managing my private and work demands," with responses ranging from 1-Strongly Disagree to 5-Strongly Agree (Banu & Duraipandian, 2014). The shift in perceived WLB was measured using the same scale with a question "I feel my Work-Life Balance has improved since COVID-19, compared to before". Finally, on a single-choice question, we asked respondents to choose what their main reason for working overtime is.

In the last section, managerial support was assessed. Respondents evaluate on a 5-point Likert scale (1-Strongly Disagree, 5-Strongly Agree) to what extent they perceive their employer is supportive towards their WLB, quality of work, and work arrangements. The question "My manager encourages me to strike a balance between personal life and professional life." was used, as Anderson et al., (2015) found that managers encouraging their employees to maintain a WLB may lead to increased levels of well-being. Additionally, previous research has found that managers should focus on output-based monitoring compared to behavior-based controls (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Beaugard, 2011). Therefore, the question "My manager is more focused on my work output quality rather than the time I invest in work." was used as a way to account for the impact telework has brought in the supervisor relationship.

RESULTS

Descriptive Results

The data sample consisted of 1089 participants after incomplete answers and preliminary questions were considered. Most of the participant's current working arrangements are fully in office settings (56.7%), whereas only 74 participants work exclusively remotely. Furthermore, the sample consisted of a quite even ratio of male (54.6%) and female (44.9%) respondents, the rest (0.5%) identified as diverse. Most participants can be categorized as belonging to the Millennials generation, with 82.8% of participants falling under the category between 25-44 years. Consequently, the majority of participants hold a mid-level employee function within their current position, which can be explained by their career-life stage as previously mentioned. Almost half of the participants (47.3%) have held their current position during a pandemic.

Data Analysis

To test the hypotheses, smartPLS software was utilized. This software uses the statistical method of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This analytical approach involved assessing both the outer model and the inner model. The outer model, known as the measurement model, ensures the reliability and consistency of the latent variables. It validates the integrity of the final associations. Subsequently, the inner model enables a precise examination of the relationships between each construct, guaranteeing accurate exploration of these connections.

Measurement Model Assessment

As a first step, we wanted to analyze the reliability of each construct (latent variable) and its indicators (question items). Outer indicator loadings above 0.708 are recommended, however in some cases, lower loadings are tolerated when accompanied by high loading scores of Average Variance Extracted and Composite Reliability, and when removal of the items does not lead to higher internal consistency reliability (ICR) (Hulland, 1999; Hair et al., 2019). This method validates the outer segment of the model and guarantees that the inner model is appropriately measured. Except for WLB_02, MS01_02, and MS01_03, all of the indicator loadings in our model have a value greater than 0.711. However, WLB_02 and MS01_02 indications were not eliminated since subsequent examination of the internal consistency reliability model revealed that the related items had no meaningful influence if removed. Appendix C lays out all outer factor loading as well as variable coding.

The following step was to measure internal consistency reliability, by testing Cronbach's alpha (α). According to Kline (1998), when the value is above 0.7, it is found acceptable to keep the indicator. However, in her book, Pallant (2020) mentions when there are less than ten question items a value of 0.5 is acceptable. The following question items were composited together to measure employee well-being (from now the composite variable will be referred to as EWB_01) and resulted in a value of 0.811: EWB01, JS, WL_satis, WA_satis. In this case, the removal of any item would not result in improved scoring. The question items measuring the flexibility of schedule, FX01_01, FX01_02, FX01_03, and FX01_04 resulted in initial a value of 0.668 with an improvement if QI FX01_03 was eliminated, leading to an acceptable score of 0.713, thus forming our new variable measuring temporal flexibility (FX01). Furthermore, question items measuring the flexibility of location (FX04), led to a score of 0.730 with no adjustments required. The variable Managerial Support (MS) consisted of four question items (MS01_01, MS01_02, MS01_03, MS01_04), resulting in a questionable value of 0.610, with a slight improvement up to 0.628 when MS01_03 was deleted. However, calling upon the suggestions in Pallant's (2020) book, the variable was kept as it consisted of only three question items. Finally, the measure for work-life balance consisted of five question items that resulted in an acceptable value of 0.762. Each question item and Cronbach's alpha values can be found in Appendix C and Appendix D



respectively. Moreover, to further assess the quality of the measurement model and the proportion of variance captured by a construct it is important to examine Average Variance Extracted. The threshold of 0.50 indicates good convergent validity, which can be found in all of our variables (see Appendix D) (Hair et al., 2016).

To assess discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, we compared the squared correlations between the constructs and their respective Average Variance Extracted. Results revealed that the squared correlation between all variables was lower than their individual Average Variance Extracted. This confirms discriminant validity, indicating the constructs are distinct and not highly correlated (Ab Hamid et al., 2017).

Structural Model Assessment

Once the measurement model has been confirmed as reliable and valid, the next step addresses the assessment of the structural model results. In doing so, we will first examine the model for potential collinearity issues by looking into variance inflation factor (VIF) values. Results showed that all predictor variables had VIF values below the recommended threshold of five (see Appendix F), indicating no significant multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2010). Once no multicollinearity was established, we went into examining the inner measurement model of our conceptual framework (Hair Jr et al., 2016). We ran Bootstrapping to investigate the hypothesized relationships with the evaluation of the structural path (inner model) by analyzing path coefficients and their statistical significance.

Firstly, mediation analysis was performed to examine the indirect relationship between variables. The results show there is no significant effect of telecommuting intensity (from now on referred to as Current_WA) on EWB_01 through FX01 ($b = -0.007$, $p = 0.109$, H1). Furthermore, the path from Current_WA to FX01 to WLB exhibited a negative and not significant effect on EWB_01 ($\beta = -0.004$, $p = 0.058$, H4). On the other hand, when Current_WA was eliminated FX01 mediated by WLB showed positive and significant results on EWB_01 ($\beta = 0.027$, $p = 0.048$). Moreover, our analysis revealed several significant pathways and their corresponding coefficients between the variables. Firstly, the path from Current_WA to FX04 to WLB demonstrated a negative relationship with stress ($\beta = -0.008$, $p = 0.026$). Similarly, the same pathway showed a negative association with EWB_01 ($\beta = -0.011$, $p = 0.025$, H5). However, when Current_WA is removed it shows that FX04 with WLB has a significant and positive impact on EWB_01 ($\beta = 0.162$, $p = 0.000$). Mediation analysis also showed that Current_WA through WLB showcases a positive and significant impact on EWB_01 ($\beta = 0.028$, $p = 0.000$, H3). Lastly, the path from Current_WA to FX04 showed a negative impact on EWB_01 ($\beta = -0.029$, $p = 0.024$, H2).

Once the indirect relationships were established, we sought to examine the significance of the relationship between the IV and dependent variable DV to evaluate the extent of mediation, whether it be partial or full. Our findings revealed that

there was no statistically significant direct effect of Current_WA on EWB_01 ($\beta = -0.015$, $p = 0.223$), suggesting full mediation between the variables (Hair et al., 2017). The direct path coefficients can be found in Appendix H.

The study also examined the moderating role of managerial support (MS) on the relationship between Current_WA and EWB_01. Without the moderating variable (MS x Current_WA), the R-sq value for EWB was .670. With the inclusion of the interaction term, this value has changed to .675 (see Appendix I). Moreover, the significance of the moderating effect was analyzed, and the results revealed a positive and significant effect of MS x Current on EWB_01 ($\beta = 0.019$, $p = 0.001$, H6).

Afterward, we looked into the R-sq values of each of the endogenous variables. This number represents the variance explained by each endogenous construct and the explanatory power of the presented model (Shmueli & Koppius, 2011). According to Falk and Miller (1992), the values are regarded as adequate if they are equal to or higher than 0.10. All our variables, except FX04, fall within this range.

Additionally, Chi-sq analysis showed that there is a significant tendency for office workers to engage in overtime work compared to other groups. More specifically, 49.3% of office workers engage in overtime compared to the other three groups that report working average or less than average working hours. Moreover, the reason for working overtime across all groups has been "Working on multiple projects simultaneously".

DISCUSSION

The research's first aim was to investigate the influence of perceived flexibility in arranging working hours and work location on facilitating the link between working arrangements and EWB. Examining the mediating role of perceived flexibility in working arrangements adds depth to the understanding of the relationship between work arrangements and employee well-being, as our analysis found that the relationship is fully mediated and has no significant direct impact. The findings of the current study indicate that the direct relationship between employee's working arrangement and their EWB mediated by flexibility of schedule did not yield a significant effect. This confirms the early pandemic results of Bellman & Hübler (2020) and it suggests that the influence of working arrangements on employee well-being may not be solely driven by the perceived flexibility in scheduling working hours. Furthermore, when considering the impact of WLB, in the relationship between working arrangement, flexibility of schedule, and EWB the results remain insignificant. In more recent research, temporal flexibility has been recognized as an important aspect of WLB, allowing employees to have greater control over their time, and experience lower levels of stress and higher job satisfaction, which in turn positively affects their well-being (Boccoli et al., 2022). Even though our findings are not consistent with the more recent research, we have discovered that telecommuters specifically might not benefit from temporal flexibility. This might be due to their work requiring them to be online during a given timeframe which can limit their sense of autonomy



(Golden et al., 2006). Moreover, some studies go even as far as suggesting that to improve one's well-being one should have a clearly defined beginning and end of a working day (Edwards & Edwards, 1994). Another explanation might be depicted by the difference in job-related and personal reasons behind working remotely (Bellmann & Hübler, 2020).

Furthermore, in light of flexibility, the study revealed that the relationship between working arrangement and EWB is directly mediated by the flexibility of location, and when coupled with WLB, it further enhances the impact of EWB. Nonetheless, in both pathways, we have observed a negative relationship. Therefore, we have found as the intensity of telecommuting increases, there is a decrease in EWB, when mediated by both perceived flexibility of location and WLB. This suggests that fully remote workers may face challenges in effectively managing their work-life demands, resulting in lower levels of well-being. During COVID-19, there has been a surge of research papers observing high-intensity and mandatory remote work and its implications. These studies have found that generally remote work has a positive implication on EWB, however, this does not apply to everyone (Becker et al., 2022). Several reasons have been found as to why remote work might result in lower EWB, such as segmentation preferences, isolation, loneliness, or increased stress (Golden et al., 2006). A study done by Mann & Holdsworth (2003), found that telecommuters experienced more negative emotions, which was mainly driven by lack of social interaction and reduced association with the company.

We have observed that the path from telecommuting intensity to stress level, through mediation of flexibility of location and WLB is significant. In particular, high-intensity telework is associated with higher levels of stress. One possible explanation for this could be the lack of routine accompanied by telecommuting (Sargent et al., 2020). Established routines and structured days have been found to lead to lower demands for coordination, leading to more benefits such as physical and mental health. Additionally, our results also found a positive significant path from the flexibility of location to WLB on EWB when the variable of working arrangements is removed. These findings suggest that the relationship between perceived flexibility, WLB, and EWB is complex. On one hand, higher levels of perceived flexibility contribute to better WLB and enhanced EWB. On the other hand, when work arrangement intensity increases, it undermines perceived flexibility, resulting in a negative impact on WLB and EWB. This implies that in our sample, remote workers experience significantly lower well-being, which is partially supported by existing literature. More specifically, the reasons for telecommuters experiencing decreased well-being can be attributed to a variety of factors that outweigh the positive ones (such as WLB or location flexibility). Perhaps our sample experienced especially low well-being due to a lack of policies and poor implementation of flexible work arrangements. Therefore, it is important to examine in which conditions EWB reflects positively in high-intensity telework.

Existing literature suggests that managerial support plays a crucial role in establishing successful flexible work strategies (Beauregard, 2011; Gajerdan & Harrison, 2007). These studies have shown that supportive managers enhance job satisfaction and mental health in various work contexts. Moreover, Lapierre & Allen (2006) have found that the absence of managerial support can lead to higher stress levels. Consequently, we have found when employees feel their manager's support and provide guidance, it can lead to higher levels of well-being among these individuals. Our study also discovered that managerial support can mitigate the negative stress levels found among remote workers.

This result cannot be stressed enough especially when looking at the practical implications this has in the corporate setting. A lot of the current debate as stated in the introduction is positioned around the necessity to come to the office to perform well as an employee. The pure presence of the employee in an in-office setting seems to be of huge importance while other factors (such as managerial support) do by far not get as much attention. This study strongly suggests that focusing on the work arrangement alone will most likely not yield the desired results of more employee well-being and therefore performance and job satisfaction.

While our research findings reveal several significant points, it is important to mention that the present study has a large sample, of which 56.7% of employees are currently working exclusively in the office. This proportion is quite contrasting from the findings in a Gallup survey (2022), which reported that only 20% of employees are entirely on-site. Moreover, comparing these results to the pandemic working arrangements, when only 18.9% of participants said they worked exclusively in an office setting, it becomes evident that people decided or were forced to come back to office-based working arrangements. Due to the limitation of our research, we are unable to conclude as to why this might be. Other studies have reported that although preferred working styles are remote or some type of hybrid model, employers still expect their employees to come back to the office full-time (Owl Labs, 2021; Haller, 2023). Additionally, we have found that the biggest reason for working overtime across all groups (office, hybrid, and remote) is working on multiple projects simultaneously. One possible explanation for office workers reporting higher levels of well-being compared to remote workers, despite working more overtime and juggling multiple projects simultaneously, could be the social and interpersonal aspects of the office environment (Lapierre & Allen, 2006). Building upon this assumption, a plausible explanation for the deviations in our study is that a big proportion of our sample consists of Mid-level employees (56.7%). Looking at the career-age opportunities, mid-level employees might feel more motivated to be in the office as it is believed that office-based workers who experience more face-to-face contact with their supervisors are more likely to get promoted (Mann & Holdsworth, 2003; Lufkin, 2022).



LIMITATIONS

It is important to note that this study has certain limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting the results and for future research to improve upon. The data collected relied on self-report measures, which may introduce response biases (Gosling et al., 2004). The self-measurement bias can have an impact on the reports due to recalling the experiences or social desirability bias. Additionally, the measures used relied on “perceived” assessment of variables, which may differ from actual levels, due to factors that have not been captured in this study.

Furthermore, the sample size and specific context of the study may limit the generalizability of the findings. In contrast to other reports and surveys, our sample does not reflect the population as we have a relatively small number of participants engaging in exclusively remote work (only 74). Since the remote work group is significantly smaller, it may be challenging to draw robust conclusions about the well-being of remote workers specifically. The limited sample size could affect the statistical power and precision of our analysis, making it difficult to detect meaningful differences or associations accurately. Consequently, the larger office-based group may have a disproportionate influence on the overall findings, potentially overshadowing any unique characteristics or experiences of the remote workgroup.

It is also important to acknowledge due to the limited scope of our research the focus of the study was mostly on job resources and did not consider job demands. Examining both sides of the job resources and job demands model would provide a more well-rounded and comprehensive understanding of working arrangements and their impact on EWB (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Looking into the job demands allows us to see more accurately which factors put strain on employees. Moreover, as seen in our results, the nature of flexible work arrangements is very complex which can present challenges in measuring the variables. Thus, conducting research with a complex framework and large sample size ultimately leads to time and resource constraints. In return, the constraints have impacted the depth of our analysis inclusion of additional variables, and exploration of alternative methods.

Additionally, further research should include questions that contribute to a better understanding of why people work in certain working arrangements. Controlling for these variables would shed light on underlying reasons for working in the office such as organizational policies, preferences, or other factors that influence one’s decision to work remotely (Golden & Vega, 2005).

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Overall, while this study contributes to the understanding of flexible work arrangements and their impact on well-being, it is crucial to consider these limitations and encourage future research to address the gaps to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the post-pandemic workplace.

CONCLUSION

This research has aimed to investigate the landscape of post-pandemic workplaces in the context of flexible work arrangements. Our findings have further underlined the complex nature of factors involved in creating a positive work environment. Organizations should recognize the importance of providing employees with flexibility, encourage employees to balance their professional and private lives and educate managers on the importance of their role which can contribute to their overall EWB. Furthermore, efforts should be made to minimize the negative effects of high flexible work arrangements intensity on perceived flexibility and WLB, such as workload management, clear communication, and adequate resources (Golden et al., 2006).

The study revealed that intense telework leads to a small but significant decrease in EWB when mediated by psychological factors such as WLB and perceived flexibility. We deduce from this finding that other significant factors might play a central role in remote work and EWB. For instance, Sargent et al. (2020) found that stress and lack of routine can have a detrimental impact on well-being. These results also indicate that flexible work arrangements should be implemented under strict policies and contracts that help employees achieve better job satisfaction and overall WLB (Bellmann & Hübler, 2020)

MS was found to play a very significant role in all types of working arrangements. It was discovered that MS mitigates the negative effects of remote work on EWB. Perceived MS was associated with improved well-being, and it also elevated the experience of stress across all groups of flexible work arrangements.

Considering the COVID-19 pandemic and the significant changes in work arrangements it brought about, it is crucial to re-evaluate the potential benefits and drawbacks of different work arrangements on employee well-being in the post-pandemic workplace. Understanding the impact of work arrangements on well-being is essential in today’s dynamic work environment, where employees face new challenges. The findings contribute to the existing literature by highlighting the mediating and moderating effects within this framework. Understanding these relationships can inform organizations and policymakers in promoting employee well-being and creating conducive work environments.



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Table 1: Hypothesis results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Results	Sig.
H1	Perceived flexibility in scheduling working hours mediates the relationship between working arrangements and EWB, such that high intensity telecommuting leads to enhanced EWB through the mediating effect of scheduling flexibility	Not Supported	0.132
H2	Perceived flexibility in work location mediates the relationship between working arrangements and EWB, such that high intensity telecommuting leads to enhanced EWB through the mediating effect of location flexibility.	Partially Supported	0.024
H3	Work-life balance mediates the relationship between working arrangements and EWB.	Supported	0.001
H4	The indirect relationship between working arrangements and EWB is mediated by the combined influence of flexibility of schedule and WLB.	Not Supported	0.058
H5	The indirect relationship between working arrangements and EWB is mediated by the combined influence of flexibility of location and WLB.	Supported	0.000
H6	MS influences EWB positively regardless of the working arrangements.	Supported	0.001

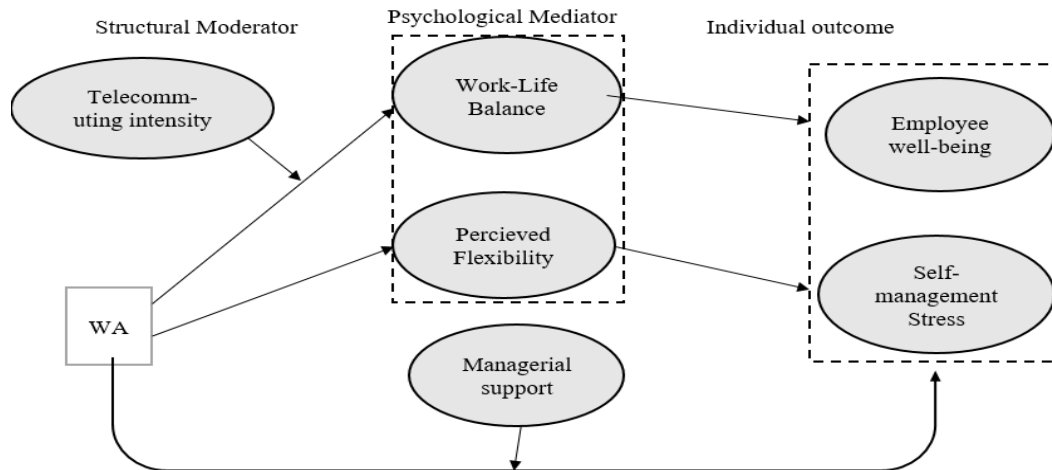
Table 2: Variable Relationships

Hypothesis	Relationship	Results	Sig.
H1	Current_WA → FX01 → EWB	Not Supported	0.132
H2	Current_WA → FX04 → EWB	Partially Supported	0.024
H3	Current_WA → WLB → EWB	Supported	0.001
H4	Current_WA → FX01 → WLB → EWB	Supported	0.021
H5	Current_WA → FX04 → WLB → EWB	Supported	0.000
H6	Current_WA x MS → EWB	Supported	0.001



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Theoretical framework: WA (work arrangement), WLB (work-life balance), EWB (employee wellbeing)



APPENDIX A

Online Questionnaire

Dear Participant,

My name is Valentina, and I am currently writing my Bachelor thesis on how work arrangements (on-site and remote) affect employee well-being in post pandemic workplace.

Your experience and contribution is highly appreciated!

Please note that:

- This survey should take no more than 6 minutes to complete.
- All responses are anonymous and confidential.

As a thank you for completing the survey, I am offering a prize giveaway of a 5EUR Amazon gift card to one lucky participant who provides their email address at the end of the survey. Your email address will not interfere with the anonymity of the answers and will only be used to contact the winner of the prize.

Thank you again for your help!

Valentina Markulin

Preliminary Question: Are you *currently employed* in a white-collar profession?

White-collar workers typically refer to individuals employed in professional, managerial, or administrative roles, typically in office-based settings. These jobs typically involve intellectual or non-manual work and often require specialized knowledge, skills, or education (e.g. Accountants, Architects, Lawyers, Consultants, IT specialists, Managers/Executives, Researcher...)

-Yes

-No

SD Socio-demographic questions

SD01 Please select your age.

- less than 18 years
- 18-24 years
- 25-34 years
- 35-44 years
- 45-54 years
- 55-64 years
- more than 65 years

SD02 Which describes your gender identity?

-Female

-Male

-Diverse

SD03 Select your current position you hold in the company you work for:

-Intern/Working Student

-Trainee/Associate (Entry-level employee)

-Mid-level employee (Non-disciplinary leadership role such as administrative staff/assistant/specialist)

-People Manager (Overseeing a team or department within the organisation)



-Senior executive (Leading other managers, part of executive board)

SD04 How long have you been working for the current employee?

- 0-1 year
- 1 year – 3 years
- 3 years – 5 years
- 5 years – 10 years
- 10+ years

WA Working Arrangements questions

WA01 Which of the following best describes your CURRENT primary work arrangement?

- Working exclusively from home/remotely
- Exclusively on-site at the company's physical office
- Remote leaning hybrid (20% of the time in the office, 80% of the time remote)
- Office leaning hybrid (80% of the time in the office, 20% of the time remote)

WA02 Which of the following best describes your primary work arrangement DURING pandemic?

- Working exclusively from home/remotely
- Exclusively on-site at the company's physical office
- Remote leaning hybrid (20% of the time in the office, 80% of the time remote)
- Office leaning hybrid (80% of the time in the office, 20% of the time remote)

WA03 Which of the following best describes your primary work arrangement BEFORE the pandemic?

- Working exclusively from home/remotely
- Exclusively on-site at the company's physical office
- Remote leaning hybrid (20% of the time in the office, 80% of the time remote)
- Office leaning hybrid (80% of the time in the office, 20% of the time remote)

EWB Below are a number of questions regarding employee well-being, stress and work-life balance. Please read each one and select an answer based on your personal experience.

1. How would you rate your overall well-being? 1-Very Poor; 5-Excellent
2. How would you rate your well-being now compared to before pandemic? 1-Much worse; 5-Much better
3. How would you rate your current stress level? 1- Very high stress: I always feel overwhelmed; 5- Very low stress: I feel relaxed and calm.
4. How satisfied are you with your present job overall? 1-Completely dissatisfied; 5- Completely satisfied
5. How would you rate your current work-life balance? 1-Very Poor; 5-Excellent
6. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your current working arrangement? 1-Completely dissatisfied; 5-Completely satisfied

FX The following section will be focusing on flexibility in working arrangements. The flexibility refers to both ability to work at a desired location as well as desired time.

FX01 Please carefully read each statement and select the most appropriate response (1- Strongly disagree; 5- Strongly agree) based on your personal experiences and opinions:

1. "I feel more satisfied with my job when I have flexibility to adjust my work hours to my personal needs"
2. "I have control in scheduling my working hours"
3. "I am able to define my working hours completely independently from others"
4. "Having flexibility in scheduling my working hours is more important to me now, compared to before the pandemic"

FX04 Please carefully read each statement and select the most appropriate response (1- Strongly disagree; 5- Strongly agree) based on your personal experiences and opinions:

1. "I have complete flexibility in choosing where I work from."
2. "I feel more satisfied with my job when I have flexibility in choosing my work location"
3. "The ability to choose unlimited quotas when I work from home has a positive impact on my employee well-being."
4. "Having flexibility to choose where I work from is more important to me now, compared to before the pandemic"

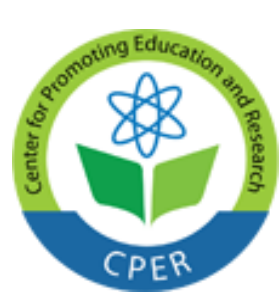
WB The following section refers to the ability of achieving Work-Life Balance (WLB) in different working arrangements.

WB01 On average, how many hours per week do you work?

- less than 20 hours
- 20-34 hours
- 34-40 hours
- 40-52 hours
- more than 50 hours

WB02 Please answer on a scale Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, how you feel about the following statements based on your personal experience:

1. "I am successful in managing my private and work demands"
2. "I am able to separate work from my private life and fully enjoy my personal time."
3. "My work arrangement allows me to balance my work and personal life."



4. "I feel my Work-Life Balance has improved since COVID-19, compared to before"
5. "Having flexibility over my schedule positively contributes to my Work-Life Balance"

WB03 What would you say is the main reason you work more hours than expected:

- Workload is higher than expected
- Working on multiple projects simultaneously
- Inability to switch off from work during non-work hours
- Struggling to separate work and personal life boundaries
- Other

MS Lastly, rate on a scale how much you agree with the following statements based on your experience:

1. "My manager encourages me to strike a balance between personal life and professional life."
2. "My manager is more focused on my work output quality rather than the time I invest in work."
3. "My manager would be accepting of a working arrangement different from my contractual working hours."
4. "It is important for me to have a supportive manager:"

APPENDIX B

Demographics

Items		Frequency	Percent (%)
Current_WA	Exclusively in the office	617	56.7
	Office-leaning hybrid	178	16.3
	Remote-leaning hybrid	220	20.2
	Exclusively remote	74	6.8
Pandemic_WA	Exclusively in the office	201	18.5
	Office-leaning hybrid	101	9.3
	Remote-leaning hybrid	361	33.1
	Exclusively remote	426	39.1
Age	less than 18	1	.1
	18-24 years	109	10.0
	25-34 years	636	58.4
	35-44 years	266	24.4
	45-54 years	69	6.3
	55-64 years	8	.7
Gender	Female	489	44.9
	Male	595	54.6
	Diverse	5	.5
Function	Intern/Working Student	46	4.2
	Trainee/Associate (Entry-level employee)	118	10.8
	Mid-level employee (Non-disciplinary leadership role)	618	56.7
	People Manager (Overseeing a team)	195	17.9
	Senior executive (Leading other managers)	112	10.3
Tenure	0-1 year	63	5.8
	1 year - 3 years	242	22.2
	3 years - 5 years	515	47.3
	5 years - 10 years	222	20.4
	10+ years	47	4.3

Note: n=1089

APPENDIX C

Table Coding

Coding	Question	Indicator Loading	Composite Label
EWB01	How would you rate your overall well-being?	0.826	EWB
SL	How would you rate your current level of stress?	1.000	
WA_satis	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your current working arrangement?	0.787	
JS	How satisfied are you with your present job overall?	0.793	



WLB_satis	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with you current work-life balance?	0.791	
WLB01	"I am successful in managing my private and work demands"	0.765	WLB
WLB02	"I am able to separate work from my private life and fully enjoy my personal time."	0.669	
WLB03	"My work arrangement allows me to balance my work and personal life."	0.741	
WLB04	"I feel my Work-Life Balance has improved since COVID-19, compared to before"	0.752	
WLB05	"Having flexibility over my schedule positively contributes to my Work-Life Balance"	0.729	
FX01_01	"I feel more satisfied with my job when I have flexibility to adjust my work hours to my personal needs"	0.740	FX01
FX01_02	"I have control in scheduling my working hours"	0.808	
FX01_03	"I am able to define my working hours completely independently from others"	0.842	
FX01_04	"Having flexibility in scheduling my working hours is more important to me now, compared to before the pandemic"	0.842	
FX04_01	"I have complete flexibility in choosing where I work from."	0.712	FX04
FX04_02	"I feel more satisfied with my job when I have flexibility in choosing my work location"	0.713	
FX04_03	"The ability to choose unlimited quotas when I work from home has a positive impact on my employee well-being."	0.779	
FX04_04	"Having flexibility to choose where I work from is more important to me now, compared to before the pandemic"	0.768	
MS01_01	"My manager encourages me to strike a balance between personal life and professional life."	0.752	MS
MS01_02	"My manager is more focused on my work output quality rather than the time I invest in work."	0.670	
MS01_03	"My manager would be accepting of a working arrangement different from my contractual working hours."	0.570	
MS01_04	"It is important for me to have a supportive manager"	0.734	

APPENDIX D

Construct Reliability and Validity

Items	Cronbach's Alpha (adjusted)	Composite reliability	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
EWB	0.811	0.811	0.876	0.639
FX01	0.713*	0.716	0.840	0.637
FX04	0.730	0.733	0.832	0.553
MS	0.628**	0.629	0.801	0.573
WLB	0.762	0.720	0.822	0.537

Note: *when FX01_03 eliminated, **when MS3 eliminated

APPENDIX E

Fornell-Larcker criterion

Items	Current_WA	EWB	FX01	FX04	MS	SL	WLB
Current_WA	1.000						
EWB	-0.052	0.799					
FX01	-0.150	0.649	0.798				
FX04	-0.069	0.773	0.760	0.744			
MS	-0.122	0.645	0.727	0.697	0.757		
SL	-0.084	0.622	0.461	0.544	0.417	1.000	
WLB	-0.009	0.746	0.642	0.732	0.681	0.526	0.716



APPENDIX F

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Items	Current_WA	EWB	FX01	FX04	MS	SL	WLB	MS x Current WA
Current_WA		1.06	1.00	1.00				
EWB								
FX01		2.95				2.46	2.37	
FX04		3.20				3.12	2.37	
MS		2.64						
STRESS								
WLB		2.52				2.24		
MS x Current WA		1.091						

APPENDIX G

Indirect path coefficients

Hypothesis	Indirect path	Original Sample	Standard deviation	Sig.
H1	Current_WA → FX01 → EWB	-0.007	0.005	0.109
H2	Current_WA → FX04 → EWB	-0.030	0.015	0.023
H3	Current_WA → WLB → EWB	0.028	0.007	0.000
H4	Current_WA → FX01 → WLB → EWB	-0.004	0.003	0.058
H5	Current_WA → FX04 → WLB → EWB	-0.011	0.006	0.022
-	FX01 → WLB → EWB	0.027	0.006	0.048
-	FX04 → WLB → EWB	0.162	0.019	0.000
-	Current_WA → FX04 → WLB → SL	-0.008	0.008	0.026

APPENDIX H

Direct path coefficients

Hypothesis	Indirect path	Original Sample	Standard deviation	Sig.
H6	MS x Current_WA → EWB	0.019	0.006	0.001
-	Current_WA → EWB	-0.015	0.020	0.223

APPENDIX I

R-square

Items	R-square	R-square adjusted
EWB	0.675	0.673
FX01	0.023	0.022
FX04	0.005	0.004
STRESS	0.343	0.341
WLB	0.507	0.506

APPENDIX J

Chi-Square and Cross tabulation (reasons for working overtime)

		Overtime reason					Total	Sig.
		1	2	3	4	5		
Current_WA	1	92	334	142	45	4	617	0.289
	2	29	99	28	21	1	178	
	3	40	105	54	18	3	220	
	4	12	45	12	5	0	74	
Total		173	583	236	89	8	1089	



APPENDIX K

Chi-Square and Cross tabulation (average weekly hours worked)

	Weekly hours worked					Total	Sig.
	1	2	3	4	5		
Current_WA	1	7	119	187	296	8	0.001
	2	5	27	86	51	9	
	3	9	60	107	40	4	
	4	9	29	16	16	4	
Total	30	235	396	403	25	1089	