

Flexible Work Arrangement, Work-Life Balance, and Social Engagement of Filipino Virtual Home-Based Workers: A Basis for Organizational Improvement

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Abstract - *This study aimed to examine the flexible work arrangement, work-life balance, and social engagement of Filipino virtual home-based workers and draw implications for organizational improvement. This study used a descriptive method and utilized a questionnaire to gather data from 306 respondents. Frequency, mean, ANOVA, and Pearson analysis were applied for statistical analysis. Results revealed that Filipino virtual homebased workers (FVHWs) believed that they would not incur career costs and administrative barriers when employed under a flexible work arrangement (FWA). Likewise, findings showed that FVHWs' personal lives do not interfere with work and vice versa and that their work enriches their personal life, and vice versa. However, FVHWs are occasionally involved in cognitive and social activities while they rarely engaged themselves in physical activities. Moreover, a significant difference is present on the following variables: personal purpose and WIPL and PLIW when grouped according to sex; career costs, WPLE, and physical activities when grouped according to age; WPLE and social activities when grouped according to marital status; benefits and PLIW and WPLE when grouped according to educational attainment; and benefits and WLB WIPL when grouped according to the frequency of overtime work. Statistically, a significant relationship was identified on the following variables: career costs and WIPL and PLIW; administrative barriers, benefits, and personal purpose and WIPL, PLIW, and WPLE; personal purpose and social activities; WIPL and PLIW and social activities; and WPLE and cognitive activities. Finally, insights were established based on the identified weaknesses of this research.*

Keywords: *flexible work arrangement, social engagement, work-life balance*

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, remarkable changes have been implemented in every aspect of most workplaces. It is worth noting the testimony which was given to the U.S. Senate in 2007 by Dr. Pitt-Catsouphes that "workplace flexibility will become one of the hallmarks of good management practice, in part because it can produce positive outcomes for employees as well as for workplaces..." [p.6]. Hence, the application of flexible work arrangement (FWA) has gained popularity in the literature and within organizations over the last two decades, but the concept has been around since the mid-1960s. In fact, FWA was first introduced at a German aerospace company in 1967.

Flexible work time arrangement addresses various concerns and issues at work. Some of these are the extension of service hours that requires employees to work during weekends or evenings because of market demand, and the challenge that employers and

employees face in adjusting working hours to attend to family responsibilities and commitments [2].

Concerning one of the flexible forms of work, smart technologies bring about the opportunity of working remotely or working from home, which drives employees with families to more than just work from home initiatives. This is related to concerns of employees, whether with or without families who wish to balance their work and life/family effectively [3]. Work-family or work-life balance is linked with the changes incorporated into work patterns for every employee regardless of gender, age, or race, to achieve a sense of rhythm that will let them to effectively combine work with other roles and commitments [4]. Undoubtedly, flexible work arrangement and work-life balance are always linked in numerous studies. Organizations have increasingly offered flexible work arrangements to help the efforts of employees to have a balance with their professional lives as well as their home and family concerns [5]. Work-life approaches

have been designed to help employees with different facets of their lives, including their responsibilities in the family, professional development, and well-being [6].

Concerning well-being, this is an aspect which is being upheld by social engagement together with mental health and healthy behavior [7]. Research has supported the correlation of social engagement with health and mental health [8], which can be associated with physical and cognitive activities. In another sense, social engagement is naturally achieved through physical contact with people, thus increasing people's social network [9]. It is through the social network that people could have access to functional support and assistance from family members, relatives, friends, and neighbors, which can be linked to social activities. Further, the type of support is essential and manifested to improve adults' well-being and sense of control and enhance the quality of life [9].

Although the use and availability of flexible work arrangements have been found to uphold positive work attitudes [10], a little is known about how employees assess flexible work arrangement, and whether this assessment leads to work-life balance and social engagement in the Philippines, and there is a scarcity of empirical studies that explore the three variables for the Philippines' case.

Moreover, no review has yet been confirmed that social engagement is linked to a flexible work arrangement and work-life balance. In most studies, it seeks to determine social engagement's importance in achieving an active and healthy life of older adults. It is also proven that social engagement has a positive impact on their physical and mental health because of constant communication and social support [11]. For that reason, it is beneficial to analyze the social engagement of Filipino virtual home-based workers considering that their work is susceptible to mental strain, health problems, depression, obesity, damage to social life, and isolation [12] due to night shift work. Nevertheless, studies have shown that the healthier the employees, the more productive they are [13]. Therefore, it is imperative to examine the correlation between flexible work arrangement and work-life balance and social engagement of Filipino virtual home-based workers. Thereby, this paper will have a practical benefit to the chosen respondents and any organization by providing insights for organizational improvement.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to examine the correlation of flexible work arrangement, work-life balance, and social engagement of Filipino Virtual Home-based Workers (FVHWs), and to draw insights for organizational improvement. Specifically, it aimed to determine the profile of the respondents in terms of sex, age, marital status, educational attainment, monthly income, and the frequency of being requested to render overtime work or work outside normal hours; the respondents' assessment toward flexible work arrangement (FWA) in terms of career costs, administrative barriers, benefits, and personal purpose; the respondents' assessment of work-life balance (WLB) in terms of work-interference with personal life (WIPL), personal life interference with work (PLIW), and work/personal life enhancement (WPLE); and the respondents' frequency of social engagement (SE) in terms of cognitive, social, and physical activities.

Further, it also endeavored to determine the difference in the assessment of flexible work arrangement, work-life balance, and social engagement among Filipino virtual home-based workers when grouped according to profile; determine the significant relationship between FWA and WLB, FWA and SE, and WLB and SE; and draw insights for organizational improvement.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study used a descriptive research design. The participants of this study are the Filipino virtual home-based workers. To make the study reliable, at least 300 sample size is needed. In this study, there were 306 respondents. The study likewise employed the purposive sampling method precisely the homogeneous purposive method. Purposive sampling is a non-random technique that is used to identify and select individuals or groups of individuals who are proficient and well-informed with a phenomenon of interest and can communicate and express opinions and experiences articulately and reflectively. More so, homogeneous sampling is applied. This focuses on participants who have similar traits or specific characteristics like ages, cultures, life experiences, or jobs. The idea is to emphasize certain similarity and how it relates to the topic being researched [14].

The instrument used for this study is from the reviews of [15] of the paper entitled: "*Flexible work arrangements in Greece: a study of employee perceptions*," [16] article entitled, "*Measuring Work-Life Balance Among the Employees of the Insurance*

Industry in India," and [17] paper entitled: "*Social Engagement Among U.S. Chinese Older Adults-Findings from the PINE Study.*" Experts validated the instrument and afterward was analyzed for reliability using Cronbach's alpha model. All the variables were found to have high reliability, with Cronbach alphas over 0.700. Statistical tools such as frequency, mean, T-test, ANOVA, and Pearson correlation analysis were used to describe and analyze the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results showed that out of 306 respondents, 73.2% or 224 respondents are female, while the remaining 26.2% or 82 respondents are male. Data from this research also presented that 58.5% or 179 respondents belong to the 26-35 age group, 23.9% or 73 respondents belong to the 36-45 age group, 14.1% or 43 respondents belong to the 18-25 age group, and only 3.6% or 11 respondents belong to 46 and above age group. Moreover, the results showed that 47.7% or 146 respondents are married, 34.3% or 105 respondents are single, 15.0% or 46 respondents are living with their partner, and 1.6% or 5 and 1.3% or four respondents are separated and widowed, respectively.

Meanwhile, in the educational attainment per se, the results revealed that the majority of Filipino virtual home-based workers are college graduates with a total of 67.6% or 207 respondents. There are 24.8% or 76 respondents who are undergraduate and 7.5% or 23 respondents who have a postgraduate degree. Additionally, the results depicted that most of the Filipino virtual home-based workers have a monthly income of below P30,000, with a total of 40.8% or 125 respondents while 22.5% or 69 respondents are earning a monthly income of P30,001 to 40,000. 21.6% or 66 respondents have a monthly income of above P50,000 and 15.0% or 46 respondents are earning P40,001 to 50,000.

Further, it illustrated that 68.3% or 209 Filipino virtual home-based workers never rendered overtime work. However, there are 10.5% or 32 of them who are requested to render overtime work once a week, 9.5% or 29 are requested to render overtime work every day, 6.5% or 20 respondents are requested to render overtime work twice a week, and only 5.2% or 16 respondents rendered overtime work thrice a week.

Because replication is required for scientific progress, papers submitted for publication must provide sufficient information to allow readers to

perform similar experiments or calculations and use the reported results. Although not everything need be disclosed, a paper must contain new, useable, and fully described information.

Table 1. Flexible Work Arrangement

FWA	WM	VI
Career Costs	1.88	D
Administrative Barriers	1.86	D
Benefits	3.53	SA
Personal Purpose	3.79	SA

Filipino virtual home-based workers (FVHWs) assessed that they would not incur any costs (adverse effects on pay, career advancement, interpersonal relationships, etc.) when employed under flexible work arrangement. The administrative barriers dimension of flexible work arrangement implies that FVHWs perceived no difficulties or obstacles in the implementation of FWA. They are in opposition that FWA is likely to be abused compared to traditional full-time work arrangements. Benefits are defined as the benefits linked to recruiting, retention, productivity, and enhanced morale of Filipino virtual home-based workers. Their perception of the benefits of a flexible work arrangement is very high. The assessment of a flexible work arrangement in terms of personal purpose shows that FWA enables Filipino virtual home-based workers to manage their life, family, and other commitments.

Table 2. Work-Life Balance

WLB	WM	VI
WIPL	1.78	D
PLIW	1.60	SD
WPLE	3.45	SA

Work interference with personal life dimension of work-life balance entails that work does not meddle with Filipino virtual home-based workers' personal life. Thus, it means that they have a relatively high level of work-life balance. Personal life interference with work connotes that work is made difficult because of personal life. In this case, Filipino virtual home-based workers strongly believe that their personal life does not intervene in their work. The assessment of work-life balance in terms of work/personal life enhancement means that FWA enriches or has positive effects on personal life and vice versa. Thus, it implies that they have a high level of work-life balance.

Table 3. Social Engagement

Social Engagement	WM	VI
Cognitive Activities	2.68	O/S
Social Activities	2.74	O/S
Physical Activities	2.10	R

Filipino virtual home-based workers are occasionally involved in cognitive activities. The respondents often listen to music. Whereas they are occasionally or sometimes involved in activities such as reading books, newspaper/magazines, watching television, and making either simple or complex home repairs. Meanwhile, the respondents rarely do art/craftwork and play musical instruments. The social activities dimension of social engagement denotes that Filipino virtual home-based workers are occasionally participating or joining other people in different events. Physical activities are characterized by activities involving bodily movement that requires energy expenditure. Filipino virtual home-based workers rarely engaged themselves in such activities.

Based on the results, male respondents showed a higher assessment of the flexible work arrangement in terms of career costs, administrative barriers, and benefits. However, such a difference is not significant. On the contrary, female respondents showed a higher assessment of the flexible work arrangement in terms of personal purpose, and a significant difference is present. According to [18], most employees are concerned about finding flexibility at work, women especially.

Meanwhile, results revealed that male respondents have a relatively higher assessment of work-life balance in terms of WIPL and PLIW. In contrast, female respondents have a higher assessment of work-life balance in terms of WPLE. It is good to note that there is a significant difference in work-life balance in terms of WIPL and PLIW when grouped according to sex. This result is following the study of [19]. He revealed that men are experiencing more work-family conflict than women, whereas women are experiencing more family-work conflict than men.

There is a significant difference in how the four age groups assessed the cost in terms of pay, promotion opportunities, and interpersonal relationships employees face for being in a flexible work arrangement. The younger age groups, particularly the 18-25 and the 26-35 years old, registered higher means compared to the assessment of the oldest 46 and above years old age group. Among the four age groups, the

respondents who are 36-45 years of age registered the lowest mean. Employees believe that their career advancement may be affected by the arrangement in the long run [20].

Likewise, the respondents' experience on work/personal life enhancement under work-life balance when they are grouped according to age specifies that there is a significant difference in how the four age groups considered whether personal life could enrich work outcomes and vice-versa. The middle age groups, specifically the 26-35 and the 36-45 years old, registered higher means compared to the experience of the oldest 46 and above years old age group.

Additionally, a significant difference in the respondents' participation in physical activities under social engagement when they are grouped according to age is present. The younger and the oldest age groups, mainly the 18-25 and the 46 and above years old, registered higher means compared to the participation of 36-45 years old age group. Among the four age groups, the respondents who are 26-35 years of age registered the lowest mean. At all ages, the benefits of having a regular physical activity have proven to have significant benefits for one's health and may prevent any potential harm through accidents [21].

The respondents' experience on work/personal life enhancement under work-life balance when they are grouped according to marital status reveals that there is a significant difference on how the five marital status groups considered whether personal life could enrich work outcomes and vice-versa. The separated, widowed, and married respondents registered higher means compared to the experience of those living with a partner. Among the five groups, the single respondents registered the lowest mean. This is contrary to the result of [22] that there are no significant differences in work/ personal life enhancement between married and unmarried police personnel. Statistical differences in marital status were not also found in the study of [16]. She expounded that the results are perhaps due to their diverse preferences and lifestyle.

Moreover, the respondents' participation in social activities under social engagement when they are grouped according to marital status means that there is a significant difference in how the five marital status groups are involved in activities or acts of consorting or joining other people. The single, widowed, and married respondents registered higher means compared to the participation of the separated groups. Among the five groups, those living with partners registered the

lowest mean. Singles and employees without children may have other priorities and engagement and are more focused on their personal interests and hobbies, as well as in social work [23], while married people tend to attend to their family responsibilities [16].

The respondents' assessment of the benefits of being under a flexible work arrangement when they are grouped according to educational attainment implies that there is a significant difference in how the three groups assessed the benefits of recruiting, retention, productivity, and enhanced morale linked to flexible work arrangement. The undergraduates registered a higher mean compared to the assessment of the college graduates. Among the three, the postgraduate school respondents expressed the lowest mean.

Similarly, the respondents' experience on personal life interference with work (PLIW) and work/personal life enhancement under work-life balance when they are grouped according to educational attainment indicate that there is a significant difference in how the three groups considered how flexible work arrangement is made difficult because of personal life and whether personal life can enrich work outcomes and vice-versa, respectively. On PLIW, the postgraduate school respondents registered a higher mean compared to the experience of college graduates. Among the three groups, the undergraduates registered the lowest mean. However, on WPLE, the undergraduates recorded a higher mean compared to the experience of college graduates. Among the three groups, the postgraduate school respondents registered the lowest mean.

The respondents' assessment of the benefits of being under a flexible work arrangement when they are grouped according to monthly income indicates that there is a significant difference in how the four income groups assessed the benefits of recruiting, retention, productivity, and enhanced morale linked to flexible work arrangement. The respondents with above P50,001 and below P30,000 monthly income registered higher means compared to the assessment of the respondents with P40,001-50,000 monthly income. Among the four monthly income groups, the respondents who have a monthly income of P30,001-40,000 registered the lowest mean. In the study of [24], it is found that employees who are employed under flextime or with time autonomy earn a higher income than those who are under fixed working time.

The respondents' assessment of benefits of being under a flexible work arrangement when they are grouped according to the frequency of being requested

to render overtime work or work outside normal hours specifies that there is a significant difference in how the benefits of recruiting, retention, productivity, and enhanced morale are linked to flexible work arrangement. In terms of benefits, respondents who never rendered overtime, rendered overtime twice a week, and daily, registered higher means compared to the assessment of the respondents who rendered overtime once a week. Among the frequencies, the respondents who rendered overtime thrice a week registered the lowest mean. According to the study of [24], employees who are under flexible work schedules and can control their work time only have a low risk of increasing their overtime. Further, the provision of work time arrangements affects the amount of overtime rendered by employees even when they select jobs with flexible work or time arrangement.

Likewise, the respondents' experience on work interference with personal life (WIPL) under work-life balance when they are grouped according to the frequency of being requested to render overtime work or work outside normal hours denotes that there is a significant difference in how the frequency of rendered overtime considered how the personal life of employees is made difficult because of flexible work arrangement. The respondents who rendered overtime daily, thrice a week, and once a week registered higher means compared to the respondents who rendered overtime twice a week. Among the frequencies, the respondents who never rendered overtime registered the lowest mean.

Table 4. Correlation between Flexible Work Arrangement and Work-Life Balance

			WLB		
			WIPL	PLIW	WPLE
FWA	CC	r-value	.301**	.201**	-.142*
		p-value	.000	.000	.013
	AB	r-value	.359**	.281**	-.191**
		p-value	.000	.000	.001
	B	r-value	-.173**	-.158**	.362**
		p-value	.002	.005	.000
	PP	r-value	-.298**	-.202**	.353**
		p-value	.000	.000	.000

A Pearson correlation was run to determine the relationship between flexible work arrangement (FWA) in terms of career costs, administrative barriers, benefits, and personal purpose; and work-life balance (WLB) in terms of work interference with personal life (WIPL), personal life interference with work (PLIW), and work/personal life enhancement (WPLE). The p-

value of 0.000 indicates that career costs and WIPL are significantly correlated. Likewise, the p-value of 0.000 indicates that career costs and PLIW are significantly correlated. While different studies suggest different interval correlation and interpretation, [25] presented and discussed that correlation coefficient of .10-.29 are weak, .30-.49 are moderate, and $\geq .50$ are strong.

Moreover, the p-value of .000 indicates that administrative barriers and WIPL; and administrative barriers and PLIW are significantly correlated. However, there is a weak negative correlation between administrative barriers and WPLE. This implies that the higher level of administrative barriers in FWA, the lower will be the respondents' WPLE.

Similarly, the p values of .002 and .005 indicate that benefits and WIPL, and benefits and PLIW are significantly correlated. Nevertheless, there are weak negative correlations between benefits and WIPL, and benefits and PLIW. The p-value of .000 indicates that benefits and WPLE are significantly correlated. The results of the correlation between benefits and WIPL, PLIW, and WPLE are like the study of [26]. They cited that employees believe that workplace morale is improved because of flexible work practices. This might have a positive influence on work-life balance. Additionally, employees can balance their work and life responsibilities with the help of their employers.

Meanwhile, the p-value of .000 indicates that personal purpose and WIPL, and personal purpose and PLIW are significantly correlated. However, there are weak negative correlations between personal purpose and WIPL, and personal purpose and PLIW. This denotes that the higher the personal purpose when in FWA, the lower their WIPL and PLIW. Further, the p-value of .000 indicates that personal purpose and WPLE are significantly correlated. Flexible work arrangement promotes and helps employees' effort to maintain balance in their work and personal engagements such as staying connected with family and friends, handling everyday jobs, etc. [27]. Similarly, an employee who could work from home may feel at peace and settled since the environment permits attending to both responsibilities – work and personal. Thus, there will only be less conflict between the two [28].

A Pearson correlation was also run to determine the relationship between flexible work arrangement (FWA) in terms of career costs, administrative barriers, benefits, and personal purpose, and social engagement in terms of cognitive, social, and physical activities.

Table 5. Correlation between Flexible Work Arrangement and Social Engagement

			Social Engagement		
			CA	SA	PA
FWA	CC	r-value	-.049	-.032	-.104
		p-value	.396	.583	.070
	AB	r-value	.003	-.079	-.131*
		p-value	.962	.167	.021
	B	r-value	.085	-.001	-.075
		p-value	.139	.983	.192
	PP	r-value	.056	.229**	.059
		p-value	.326	.000	.305

However, only personal purpose and social activities are significantly correlated ($p=.000$). The findings revealed the same study result by [29]. They found that employees who want to maintain their active lifestyle with their family and friends and keep ample time for leisure and other interests have a high preference for flexibility.

Table 6. Correlation Work-Life Balance and Social Engagement

			Social Engagement		
			CA	SA	PA
WLB	WIPL	r-value	-.129*	-.265**	-.098
		p-value	.024	.000	.086
	PLIW	r-value	-.142*	-.178**	-.143*
		p-value	.013	.002	.012
	WPLE	r-value	.167**	.123*	.042
		p-value	.003	.031	.468

A Pearson correlation was likewise run to determine the relationship between work-life balance (WLB) in terms of work interference with personal life (WIPL), personal life interference with work (PLIW), and work/personal life enhancement (WPLE) and social engagement in terms of cognitive, social, and physical activities. The p-value of 0.000 implies that WIPL and social activities are significantly correlated. Correspondingly, the p-value of 0.002 indicates that PLIW and social engagement are significantly correlated. Additionally, the p-value of .003 denotes that WPLE and cognitive activities are significantly correlated. Employees would prefer organizations that have work-life balance programs if they have a variety of personal obligations since it will help them to enjoy life and work at the same time [29].

Insights were drawn and put forward as goals and strategies for each variable. Improvement in guidelines about FWA and ensuring that barriers and costs are addressed under FWA should be targeted. Reviewing and revising the guidelines and company policy about

FWA, ensuring it is comprehensive, easy to understand, and has the solutions to alleviate any barriers as well as conducting meetings with all employees, which includes FWA in employee evaluation are the strategies involved in FWA goals. Meanwhile, ensuring a balance between work and personal life is the heart of WLB. Encouraging employees to take their annual leave, support family time, and sponsor monthly activities while employees must set priorities and track time, set boundaries, take a vacation, and always evaluate work-life balance regularly. For the social engagement, same goal as the WLB must be placed. Sponsoring monthly or quarterly activities to encourage and promote cognitive, social, and physical activities can be done by the employers and the employees must allow themselves to learn new hobbies like playing musical instruments, to attend concerts and musical plays, and to make exercise a must-do, not a should do like bicycling.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The conclusions are drawn based on the findings of the study. There are more female Filipino virtual home-based workers (FVHWs) than males; the majority of FVHWs belong to the 26-35 age group, are married, are college graduates, never rendered an overtime work, and most FVHWs have a monthly income of below P30,000. On one hand, FVHWs generally disagree that they will incur costs and barriers when employed under a flexible work arrangement (FWA). On the other hand, the FVHWs have a strong agreement on the benefits of FWA and on their personal purpose of choosing an FWA. FVHWs differed that their work interferes with their personal life. Moreover, they have a firm contention that their personal life interferes with their work. Nonetheless, they have a strong agreement that their work enhances their personal life and vice versa. FVHWs occasionally perform and participate in cognitive and social activities while they are rarely involved in physical activities. The significant difference is present in the following variables: FWA (personal purpose) and WLB (WIPL and PLIW) when grouped according to sex; FWA (career costs), WLB (WPLE), and social engagement (physical activities) when grouped according to age; WLB (WPLE) and social engagement (social activities) when grouped according to marital status; FWA (benefits) and WLB (PLIW and WPLE) when grouped according to educational attainment; and FWA (benefits) and WLB (WIPL) when grouped according to the frequency of overtime work. The significant relationship is evident

in the following variables: FWA (career costs) and WLB (WIPL and PLIW); FWA (administrative barriers, benefits, and personal purpose) and WLB (WIPL, PLIW, and WPLE); FWA (personal purpose) and social engagement (social activities); WLB (WIPL and PLIW) and social engagement (social activities); and WLB (WPLE) and social engagement (cognitive activities). Insights were established for organizational improvement in terms of flexible work arrangement, work-life balance, and social engagement.

Based on the conclusions drawn, recommendations are put forward but not limited to the following statements. Employers must establish a clear policy that having a flexible work arrangement will not affect employees' salaries, promotion opportunities, and interpersonal relationships. Likewise, management may adopt a flexible work arrangement policy, which is tested to be an effective and viable alternative so that obstacles and issues regarding the arrangement may be avoided. Continuous and effective implementation of flexible work arrangement must be observed by responding to employees' need for flexibility to manage their competing demands. As to employees, setting priorities and boundaries must be practiced so as not to interfere with work. Employers may sponsor activities that promote and encourage FVHWs to be engaged in cognitive, social, and especially physical activities. Whereas employees must participate and allow themselves to be more active and to learn new hobbies. A proposed flexible work arrangement anchored on achieving work-life balance and social engagement may be tabled for discussions, comments and recommendations, and further application. Other variables, such as the types of FWA, and determining the effect or impact of FWA on WLB and SE may be put forward for further research and generalization of the research results.

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