



Balancing Boundaries a Comparative Study of Fixed and Flexible Work Schedule of Women Working Professionals in India

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Received: 17 July 2025

Revised: 31 July 2025

Accepted: 14 August 2025

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ABSTRACT- In the ever-changing work landscape numerous female professionals in India juggle rising professional obligations with domestic caregiving duties. This research examines the impact of different work schedule fixed versus flexible on these women's personal and professional lives. Data from 120 participants was collected using a mixed methods approach and statistical analysis. The study analyses factors like productivity, work life balance, job satisfaction and mental health. The results show that flexible arrangements improve job satisfaction, emotional health and career progress. Although fixed schedule provides stability, they may limit autonomy and flexibility. The study stresses the importance of comprehensive workplace solutions such as hybrid work models, caregiving assistance and mental health services to foster a more inclusive balanced and long-term work environment for women.

KEYWORDS- Work Life Balance, Women Professionals, Fixed Work Schedule, Flexible Work Schedule, Hybrid Models, Career Advancement, Mental Health, Productivity, Gender Equity

I. INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving work environment, an increasing number of women are taking up jobs juggling work and home responsibilities. The structure of their workdays is critical not just for their professional development but also for their general wellbeing. This research examines how rigid and flexible work schedule are going to impact different aspects of women work including productivity, mental health, job satisfaction and career advancement opportunities. While rigid schedule provides structure and predictability, they may limit personal freedom and flexibility. On the contrary flexible schedule offer more autonomy helping women manage various roles more efficiently. The research explores these dynamics using both numerical and qualitative methods to highlight how sensitive inclusive workplace policies can bring about real change. The ultimate objective is to assist organizations aiming to develop supportive fair and high performing work environments for female professionals.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the last 20 years, many studies have shown that flexible work arrangements can greatly benefit both men and women professionals. These arrangements can increase productivity, reduce stress, and improve work-life balance. Waseem [1] found that flexible work hours lead to higher productivity and less absenteeism, while Çivilidağ and Durmaz [2] observed that these arrangements significantly improve job satisfaction and overall performance. Abid and Barech [3] also found a link between flexible schedules, reduced stress, and better work output.

In the Indian IT sector, there is a growing demand for flexible work models that meet industry needs as pointed out by Raskar and Khatke [4]. Women in particular benefit from flexible schedules as evidenced by Fransman [5] in a study at a South African university. Munjal and Anooja [6] also demonstrated that flexibility can help reduce stress and improve work-life integration, while Jivan [7] noted that flexible hours often boost motivation and energy levels among women. Thakur [8] also found a strong correlation between flexible hours and high performance, particularly among IT professionals in India.

A more recent study by Venkatesh and Sandra [9] suggests that flexible schedules help professionals balance their productivity and personal obligations. Control over work time is essential for enhancing job engagement as supported by Kossek and Michel [10]. The Work and Family Border Theory by Clark [11] explains how flexibility in boundaries is crucial for maintaining harmony between personal and professional roles. Role conflict, which can lead to job dissatisfaction, is most significant when work structures are rigid as identified by Greenhaus and Beutell

[12] Family-focused research further supports these findings. Hill et al. [13] concluded that flexible work models lower turnover and increase loyalty, especially in cultures where family plays a central role. Shockley and Allen [14] found that flexibility in scheduling improves gender equity in workplaces, while Allen et al. [15] discovered that when employees have more control over their schedule, they are less likely to experience burnout.

By examining larger structural aspects, Bailyn [16] suggested that transforming workplace norms is crucial for women's career progression. Moen et al. [17] mentioned lower stress levels for those with flexible work options, while Berkun [18] linked independence at work to increased creative output. Wayne et al. [19] stated that job flexibility

encourages stronger organizational loyalty, and Rapoport et al. [20] encouraged a cultural change in work design for long-term work-life sustainability.

Several scholars have indicated that rigid work settings lead many women to abandon their jobs. Glass [21] discovered these structures clash with caregiving duties, while Briscoe [22] and Boushey [23] showed that flexibility prevents women from leaving their jobs and boosts overall productivity. Additionally, Bakker and Demerouti's [24] Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model emphasized that having control over scheduling enhances job engagement, and Schieman and Glavin [25] found control over work time to be a strong predictor of reduced psychological distress.

However, there is a lack of empirical studies in India comparing fixed and flexible scheduling models, particularly focusing on women professionals. Furthermore, the psychological and long-term career development outcomes linked to these scheduling models are under-researched, underscoring the need for focused studies that can inform inclusive workplace practices in India.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive and comparative approach to look at how different work schedule affect women's work and personal lives. The aim was to find out how work schedule influence work-life balance, productivity, job happiness, mental health, and career advancement for women in professional roles. To get a wide and detailed view both numbers-based and word-based methods were used.

The research included 120 women from different job areas such as education, engineering, healthcare, government, and freelancing. They were given a structured questionnaire with 20 questions. The questions were about work schedule, job tasks, job satisfaction, stress levels and opportunities for career growth. Women were chosen using a purposeful method to make sure the study included people from different types of jobs and industries. Participants were split into three groups based on their work style 50% had regular schedule 30% had flexible schedule and 20% had a mix of both.

About 48.3% of the women were under 25 and most were in the early stages of their careers. Numbers data was checked using Google Sheets and Microsoft Excel while word data was grouped into topics like childcare problems how happy people were with their schedule what stops them from being productive and what gets in the way of career growth.

Using both numbers and words together helped give a clearer picture of the study's results. The study considered factors like age, job and work schedule. Participants talked about challenges related to personal duties such as childcare looking after elderly family members and taking care of them. They also discussed job satisfaction and mental health. These issues were looked at in connection with their work schedule. The study also examined how work schedule influence long term career chances such as getting promoted, making professional connections and going back to school. The Job Demands Resources (JD R) model and Work Life Balance Theory were used to explain how flexible schedule can be helpful, while fixed schedule can be stressful. Feminist Theory was used to understand how strict work structures affect women who have to balance work and family responsibilities.

Using the JD R framework the study looked at how job demands like fixed hours and overtime affect productivity and job satisfaction and how resources like flexible work and independence help improve these aspects.

The questionnaire was checked for reliability using a pilot test and the feedback helped improve any confusing or misleading questions. Both online and paper-based forms had a high number of responses and none of the answers were left incomplete or not properly filled out. Responses that were unclear or uncertain were seen as showing that the employee needs did not match how their work was organized.

The study looked at groups of people who had fixed schedule, flexible schedule and hybrid schedule. It found differences in how satisfied they were their mental health and how they saw their chances for career growth. It also examined how different schedule affected challenges like taking care of family, feeling stressed, and experiencing burnout.

Overall, the way the study was carried out gave a clear picture of how women professionals experience fixed and flexible work schedule. The strong methods and wide range of participants make the results useful for different work environments in both urban and semi urban areas of India.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

A study looked at 120 women who work professionally. Half of them had fixed work hours 30% had flexible hours and 20% worked in a hybrid setup. Most of the women were under 25 showing that the workforce is young and changing. Engineers made up the biggest group. Women with flexible schedule felt the most satisfied with their jobs, at 67.5%, while those with fixed hours had average satisfaction. More than two thirds of all women said they felt work and life balance was good, but stress and mental health were still issues, especially for those with fixed hours. Women with flexible hours were more confident in reaching their goals and managing their tasks.

However, many with fixed hours felt overwhelmed. Flexible work was also connected to better emotional health and helped some women go back to school. Hybrid workers had mixed feelings often confused by switching tasks so often. Many women had trouble balancing home and work also their careers slowed down because of strict schedule.

Fixed hours also made it hard to meet people and build connections. The study found that flexible work led to higher job satisfaction and better mental health supporting the ideas in the research. Overall, the results show that flexible work helps women feel better emotionally be more productive and enjoy their careers more. But the study also points out that companies need to improve their support and communication for these workers.

V. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study shows that flexible work schedule makes a big difference for women in their careers. Women who work flexibly said they are happier at work feel healthier mentally and have a better work balance between their job and personal life. They feel in charge of their time take better care of themselves and have more energy to handle both work and family responsibilities. Fixed work hours provide a set schedule and a sense of routine but they often do not allow

the flexibility that many women need especially those who are also taking care of children or other family members. Hybrid work setups can be helpful but they sometimes don't offer a steady routine which can cause some confusion. Women with flexible schedule also said they feel less stressed and burned out and they have more freedom to learn new skills and connect with others in their field both of which are important for growing in their careers.

On the other hand, women with strict schedule often feel limited. Over 40% of them said their fixed hours slowed their career growth or stopped them from getting involved in important projects.

The study clearly shows that flexible scheduling is more than just a nice perk it's a key part of helping women succeed and stay emotionally healthy.

To create workplaces that are welcoming and strong companies should offer flexible options that fit different job roles. As more work is done online remote and hybrid setups aren't just possible, they are essential for building a workforce ready for the future.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study shows how important flexible work schedule are for helping women feel better at work and in their personal lives. When women have flexible work options, they tend to be happier with their job feel healthy mentally and have a better balance between their work and personal time. These women often feel more in charge of their time experience less stress and are more likely to focus on improving their skill and building professional connection and things that help them advance in their career. On the other hand, fixed work schedule while providing routine can limit how much control women have and make it harder for them to take care of family responsibilities or move forward in their career. Hybrid work setup was promising but were not always reliable for everyone. The study suggest that flexibility is not just a nice perk it is something essential for keeping women involved and growing in the workplace. To create workplace that are both inclusive and effective companies need to offer flexible schedule that fit different role back them with good HR policies and support a culture that values people wellbeing as much as their productivity.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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