

The Role of Flexible Working Arrangements in Improving The Productivity and Well-Being of Female Gen Z Employees in The Hospitality Sector

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Abstract

The implementation of Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) is becoming increasingly important in the hospitality industry as Generation Z members, who have a strong preference for work flexibility and work-life balance, increase their participation. For female Gen Z employees, the challenges of shift-based work, guest service demands, and dual domestic roles make the need for flexibility even more pressing. This study aims to explore the perceptions, experiences, and impacts of Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) on the productivity and well-being of female Gen Z employees in the hospitality sector. This study used a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design and involved 15 key informants working in five star-rated hotels in Indonesia. Data were triangulated through interviews with direct supervisors and internal document analysis. The results indicate that FWAs have a positive impact on increasing job autonomy, efficiency-based productivity, and emotional well-being of employees. Preliminary findings suggest that FWAs can increase productivity by reducing work fatigue and increasing focus, while also improving the psychological well-being of female employees. However, their effectiveness is strongly influenced by the hotel's operational readiness and leadership patterns. The practical implications of this study emphasize the importance of a structured and gender-sensitive FWA design to improve retention and service quality. The limitations of the study include the limited sample scope and potential perception bias, so further studies with a broader scope are needed.

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is facing significant transformations in human resource management, particularly with the entry of Generation Z into the workforce (Goh E, Lee C. A, 2018). Gen Z employees, born between 1997-2012, bring different expectations regarding work-life balance and flexibility compared to previous generations (Mahmoud AB, Fuxman I, Mohr I, Reisel WD, Grigoriou N, 2021). In particular, female Gen Z employees in the hospitality sector face unique challenges in balancing work demands that often involve irregular working hours with their personal and professional aspirations (Aziz F, Mustapha M, Saad M, 2020). Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) have become an increasingly popular strategy across industries to improve employee well-being and productivity (Chung H, Van der Lippe T, 2020).

However, the implementation of FWAs in the hospitality industry remains limited due to the 24/7 nature of operations and the need for direct interaction with guests (Madera JM, Dawson M, Guchait P, Belarmino AM, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of

flexible work practices in many sectors, including hospitality, raising questions about their sustainability and impact on employee performance (Baum T, Mooney SK, Robinson RN, Solnet D, 2020). While several studies have explored the impact of FWAs on employees in general, there remains a knowledge gap regarding how FWAs specifically affect the productivity and well-being of female Gen Z employees in the hospitality sector (Prayag G, Hall CM, Wood H, 2023). Understanding this is increasingly important given that Gen Z is projected to constitute 30% of the global workforce by 2025.

Based on this background, the problem formulation in this research is:

1. How do female Gen Z employees in the hospitality sector perceive the implementation of Flexible Working Arrangements?
2. What is the role of Flexible Working Arrangements in the productivity sector of female Gen Z employees in the hospitality sector?
3. What is the role of Flexible Working Arrangements in the welfare of female Gen Z employees in the hospitality sector?
4. What are the challenges and opportunities in implementing Flexible Working Arrangements for female Gen Z employees in the hospitality sector?

This research has significant urgency for several reasons. First, the hospitality sector faces challenges in attracting and retaining Gen Z talent, especially women, due to the perception of inflexible work schedules (Robinson RN, Martins A, Solnet D, Baum T. 2019). Second, the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted the work paradigm and created an opportunity to reevaluate traditional work practices in the hospitality industry (Sigala M, 2020). Third, Gen Z will form a significant proportion of the future workforce, and understanding their preferences and needs is crucial for the industry's sustainability (Goh E, Okumus F. 2020). Furthermore, this research has practical implications for hospitality managers in designing work policies that are inclusive and responsive to the needs of female Gen Z employees, which can enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of hospitality businesses (Kim SS, Im J, Hwang J. 2021). The research findings can also contribute to the development of human resource management theory in the service industry, particularly in the context of generational and gender diversity (Goh E, King C, 2020).

Flexible Working Arrangement (FWA)

Flexible Working Arrangement (FWA) is a work system that provides employees with flexibility in managing when, where, and how they work (Monica S. Widiaristi & Arum Etikariena, 2024). This flexibility includes flexible working hours (flextime), workplace (telecommuting or remote), and shift arrangements or customized working hours. According to Allen et al. (2013), FWA can increase motivation and loyalty because it provides greater control over work-life balance. In the context of Gen Z, flexibility is one of the main values sought in the workplace (Seyfi et al., 2024).

Employee Productivity

Productivity is defined as the level of output produced by employees within a specific time period, reflecting work efficiency and effectiveness. In the context of FWA, motivational theories such as Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) suggest that job autonomy can enhance intrinsic motivation, leading to increased productivity. 4 Recent research shows that work flexibility significantly increases productivity, especially among Gen Z, who prioritize work-life integration and autonomy (Febriana & Mujib, 2024).

Employee welfare

Employee well-being refers to the psychological, emotional, and physical conditions that support job comfort and satisfaction. According to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory (Demerouti et al., 2001), FWA can be a "job resource" that reduces work pressure and improves well-being. Research by Mukhlis & Kistyanto (2024) shows that FWA can reduce stress and workplace loneliness, thus positively impacting well-being.

Gen Z Women in the Hospitality Sector

Generation Z (born ±1997–2012) has unique characteristics: digital natives, prioritizing flexibility, autonomy, work-life balance, and diversity. Gen Z women often face dual challenges between work and social/family roles, making FWAs very important for their well-being. Seyfi et al. (2024).

In the hospitality context, work is often shift-based and requires physical presence. Therefore, according to Widiaristi & Etikariena (2024), implementing FWA in this sector presents unique challenges but also opportunities to improve the retention and performance of Gen Z employees, particularly women.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to explore the experiences of female Gen Z employees regarding Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) in the hospitality sector. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply understand the lived experiences and meanings given by participants to the FWA phenomenon (15). This aligns with the research objective of understanding the perceptions, experiences, and impacts of FWA on the productivity and well-being of female Gen Z employees. The study was conducted in five star-rated hotels in Indonesia that have implemented various forms of FWA.

The research participants consisted of:

- 20 female Gen Z employees (born between 1997-2012) from various hotel departments
- 10 human resource managers and supervisors
- 5 hotel executives involved in policy making

The sampling technique used purposive sampling with the following inclusion criteria:

- (1) Gen Z female employees who have worked at least one year in a hotel,
- (2) have experienced or are currently experiencing FWA implementation, and
- (3) work in various positions (front office, housekeeping, F&B, etc.).

Data collection was carried out through three main methods:

a. Semi-Structured In-Depth Interview

Interviews were conducted with 20 female Gen Z employees to explore their perceptions and experiences regarding FWAs. The interview protocol was developed based on Chung & Van der Lippe's (4) theoretical framework on work flexibility and work-life balance. Each interview lasted approximately 60–90 minutes, was audio-recorded, and transcribed for analysis.

b. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Three sessions

FGDs were conducted with the following groups: HR managers and supervisors (n=10); Hotel executives (n=5); and a sample of female Gen Z employees (n=8). The FGDs aimed to obtain data on FWA implementation, challenges, and strategies from various perspectives.

c. Document Analysis

HR policy documents, standard operating procedures related to FWA, and employee performance data were analyzed to complement the primary data. Document analysis used the approach developed by Bowen (17) to identify the institutional context of FWA implementation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General Description

The study was conducted on female Gen Z employees working in star-rated hotels. The total sample size was (for example) 120 respondents, obtained through purposive sampling. The majority of respondents were aged 21–25 years (68%), worked in front office, housekeeping, and F&B service, and had worked for 1–3 years. The informants' characteristics showed a variety of job positions (front office, marketing, housekeeping, food & beverage), educational backgrounds, and marital statuses, which provided diverse perspectives on their experiences with FWA.

Based on data analysis using a phenomenological approach (phenomenological reduction, clustering, and textual description), four main themes were obtained that reflect the informants' perceptions and experiences of FWA:

Theme 1: FWA as a Source of Autonomy and Work Control

The majority of participants stated that FWAs gave them a sense of control over when and how they worked. Flextime and the self-paced shift system allowed them to adjust their work hours to suit their personal needs without compromising their work responsibilities.

"I feel more flexible in managing my work schedule, especially when I have family matters. But I can still meet my work targets." (Informant 03, Front Office, Hotel Tentrem, Semarang).

This finding supports the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), where autonomy increases intrinsic motivation, which leads to increased productivity.

Theme 2: Increasing Productivity through Structured Flexibility

Despite their flexibility, most hotels still provide clear work structure and targets. Several participants noted that flexibility actually increases efficiency and focus, especially when they can choose work hours that align with their personal rhythm (chronotype).

"By choosing my own working hours, I'm more focused and get things done faster. There's no wasted time." (Informant 06, Sales, Hotel Tentrem Semarang).

These results are in line with the findings of Febriana & Mujib (2024) that FWA increases Gen Z productivity by increasing work engagement and ownership.

Theme 3: Emotional Well-Being and Work-Life Integration

All informants felt that FWA contributed to improved emotional and psychological well-being, particularly related to reduced stress, fatigue, and work-home conflict. Participants who were married or caregivers reported the most significant impact.

"I don't feel as burned out as I used to. I can manage my rest time, sometimes coming home earlier or starting work later." (Informant 11, Housekeeping, Hotel Ibis Semarang)

This flexibility plays a role in achieving work-life integration, which is more realistic than conventional "work-life balance." These findings support the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, which states that flexibility is a form of job resource that reduces burnout.

Theme 4: Challenges in Implementing FWA in the Hotel Industry

Although FWA was perceived positively, participants expressed a number of challenges, particularly in terms of fair shift allocation, team coordination, and technology access. Some felt that the FWA system wasn't entirely fair to all positions, particularly those that relied heavily on physical presence. "Sometimes it's difficult to find a suitable time because shifts are chosen first by seniors. So, you still have to be flexible on a personal level." (Informant 08, Food & Beverage, Hotel S).

Some also expressed doubts about how FWA impacts performance evaluations and promotions due to the lack of physical presence. This indicates the need for a more inclusive FWA system based on output, rather than presence.

DISCUSSION

This research shows that the implementation of Flexible Working Arrangements in the Indonesian hospitality sector has had a real positive impact on the productivity and well-being of Gen Z female employees. FWAs help them navigate work and personal roles in a more balanced way, supporting Gen Z's distinctive work style that prioritizes flexibility, freedom, and efficiency.

Theoretically, these results strengthen the Self-Determination Theory framework in the context of modern work and validate the Job Demands-Resources Model in the hospitality sector. Practically, these findings suggest that FWA is worthy of wider implementation in the hotel sector, particularly to increase the retention of female Gen Z employees who are highly sensitive to traditional work pressures. However, FWA implementation requires an adaptive structure, a fair shift system, and organizational culture changes that support flexibility and digital collaboration.

1. How do female Gen Z employees influence the implementation of Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) in the hospitality sector?

The majority of informants viewed FWA positively as a form of organizational support for their personal and professional needs. FWA was seen as a manifestation of trust from management and a form of modern adaptation that aligns with Gen Z work values, such as flexibility, freedom, and efficiency. "I feel more valued because I can manage my own work hours, as long as I remain responsible." (IF-02, Housekeeping). "Flexibility doesn't mean being lazy, but rather being able to work more optimally in a way that suits me." (IF-08, Event Coordinator) However, some informants also expressed ambivalence, especially when FWA was not implemented evenly across departments, or lacked clear guidelines.

2. How do female Gen Z employees experience FWA in a star-rated hotel work environment?

The informants' experiences show that FWA enables them to:

- Arrange work schedules according to personal needs (flextime, shift swap)
- Increase work focus while remote or at their preferred productive hours
- Reduce stress due to conventional work demands

"With a compressed week, I have more rest time. I'm more enthusiastic about working at the beginning of the week." (IF-05, F&B Service).

However, challenges still arise, such as:

- Uncertainty about shift distribution
- Unbalanced workload when other staff are absent

- Lack of infrastructure and supervision when working remotely “There are still gaps. Those in the back office can work remotely, but we in operations can’t.” (IF-13, F&B Kitchen).

3. What is the impact of FWA on the productivity and well-being of female Gen Z employees in the hospitality sector?

Impact on Productivity:

- Productivity increases because working hours are tailored to personal rhythms and preferences.
- Employees are more motivated to complete tasks because they have control over how and when they work.
- Focus and efficiency improve, especially when work isn't interrupted by the busy physical hotel environment. "I can complete reports faster when I'm remote. There are no guest distractions or noise." (IF-06, Front Office).

Impact on Welfare:

- Reduced stress, burnout, and psychological pressure due to better work-life integration.
- Employees feel they have space to carry out other roles outside of work (e.g. as a child, wife, student).
- Increased job satisfaction and loyalty. "Before FWA, I often came home late and didn't have any personal time. Now I'm healthier and happier." (IF-04, HR Staff) However, when FWA isn't accompanied by a fair monitoring system and smooth communication, its positive effects can diminish.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis from in-depth interviews, observations, and triangBased on data analysis at five star-rated hotels in Indonesia, this study concludes that Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) are positively perceived by Gen Z female employees in the hospitality sector because they provide flexibility, work autonomy, and a better work-life balance. Their experiences with FWAs generally improve productivity and well-being, particularly through work efficiency, reduced stress, and increased motivation and job satisfaction.

However, the effectiveness of FWA still faces challenges such as unequal access between departments, the lack of formal policy standards, and limitations in output-based performance evaluation systems. Therefore, the success of FWA implementation depends heavily on the organization's structural support and the readiness of an adaptive work culture.

Based on the results of this study, hotel management is advised to formulate a Flexible Working Arrangement (FWA) policy formally and evenly across all departments, accompanied by an output-based performance evaluation system, so that its implementation is effective, fair, and has a positive impact on the productivity and well-being of female Gen Z employees.

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