

Work Flexibility and Job Satisfaction: Shifting Workplace Norms

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Family-friendly policies promoting work-life balance contribute to desirable outcomes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. However, additional information is needed about the impact of various flexible work options. While flexible work may increase job satisfaction due to the autonomy it provides, it can also create work-life imbalance. This study examined work flexibility variables. A clear relationship was found between work flexibility and job satisfaction; additionally, job satisfaction increases with greater flexibility to deal with family matters. Participants indicated that the greatest job satisfaction came from the opportunity to work often from home, but not always work from home.

Keywords: flexible work, job satisfaction, work-life balance, family-friendly work policies, organizational commitment

INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction has a positive impact on employee behaviors such as performance, productivity, organizational commitment, absenteeism, and retention (e.g., see Cai et al., 2019; Cherif, 2020; Harrison et al., 2006; Judge et al., 2001; Riketta, 2008; Shuck et al., 2011). Determination of job quality is subjective, but typically reflects how employees feel about their jobs and the characteristics of their work (Benedetti et al., 2020; Spector, 1997). In other words, job satisfaction indicates the degree to which people like or dislike their jobs (Spector, 1997). Family-friendly policies promoting work-life balance such as flexible work hours are related to desirable outcomes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (e.g., see Andrade et al., 2019; Cherif, 2020; Lourel et al., 2009; Martinez-Sanchez et al., 2018; Scandura & Lankau, 1997).

Flexible work has been the focus of much discussion in organizations as the COVID-19 pandemic expanded possibilities and managers began to recognize that employees could be productive and accountable outside the office. Thirty-five percent of American job holders representing all economic sectors report the ability to work from home full time with 58% indicating the availability of remote work options part time (McKinsey & Company, 2022). This represents a major shift in workplace norms. It also

suggests that employers meet employee demands for flexible work in order to compete for talent; work flexibility is a top reason for people to accept new jobs.

However, additional information is needed about the impact of various flexible work options on job satisfaction. While flexible work may increase job satisfaction due to the autonomy it provides, it can also create work-life imbalance with employees being constantly on call (e.g., see McDaniel et al., 2021; Mellner, 2016; Steidelmuller et al., 2020; Yang & Yin, 2020). The purpose of this study was to examine work flexibility variables using a job satisfaction model based in part on questions in the International Social Survey Program survey (ISSP, 2015). Specifically, the survey sought to examine the nature of the workplace during and emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic. Survey results were analyzed to determine how various aspects of work flexibility impacted job satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To gain insights into factors associated with work flexibility, the literature review focuses on work-life balance issues and family-friendly work practices, remote work, the role of gender, and insights from theory.

Work-Life Balance

Employees contribute skills and expertise to their organizations in return for benefits as described by social exchange theory (Mehwish et al., 2019). This in turn enhances the achievement of organizational goals and improved organizational performance (Cai et al., 2019; Cherif, 2020). Work-life balance contributes to organizational commitment (Cherif, 2020; Martinez-Sanchez et al., 2018; Vijaya & Hemamalini, 2012) as well as organizational citizenship behavior (Pradhan et al., 2016) and job performance (Christian et al., 2011; Oyewobi et al., 2019). Organizational commitment is particularly high in organizations with work-family policies (Lourel et al., 2009; Martinez-Sanchez, 2018). Reversely, job satisfaction and job commitment have a positive effect on work-life balance (Aruldoss et al., 2021).

Spillover theory suggests that work and family domains are interrelated (Frischman, 2009). Job satisfaction can spill over to family, friends, and work relationships, and positively impact physical and emotional health. Conversely, the interference of work at home, such as through work-related technology, results in reduced life and job satisfaction and increased feelings of overload (McDaniel et al., 2021). The spillover of work-related tasks into home life is largely negative (Schlachter et al., 2018; Yang & Yin, 2020). Technology has enabled constant access and created increased employer demands for extended work hours (Mellner, 2016) while also providing the benefits of telecommuting, flextime, and remote work (Hunter et al., 2019; Yang & Yin, 2020). This “autonomy paradox” has resulted in increased control of employees under the guise of greater autonomy (Steidelmuller et al., 2020, p. 998).

Various human resource practices can increase employee job satisfaction and commitment (Ana et al., 2019; Cherif, 2020; Kooij et al., 2010). These include policies that support work-life balance. These practices may have differing impacts depending on context and culture; thus, studies examining global workplace experiences are valuable in informing managerial approaches. For example, work-life balance may be more relevant to job satisfaction in individualistic cultures than collectivist cultures (Andreassi, 2014). In the latter, work is viewed as contributing to family well-being (Grzywacz et al., 2007), and as such, less work-life conflict is experienced (Hassan et al., 2010; Thein et al., 2010) whereas in Western or individualistic cultures, time away from family is viewed as an obstacle that detracts from family life (Andreassi, 2014; Yang et al., 2000).

Work-family conflict has a negative impact on job satisfaction (Adisa et al., 2016; Isfianadewi & Noordyani, 2020). Coping strategies such as social support, supervisor support, networking, clear expectations, time management, job flexibility, cognitive reframing, communication, delegation, resources to sustain self-esteem and well-being, and a family-friendly organizational culture can address this (e.g., see Kalliath & Kalliath, 2014; Halbesleben et al., 2014; Isfianadewi & Noordyani, 2020; Wu et al., 2018). Family-friendly policies can mitigate incompatibilities between work and home roles (e.g., see Adisa et al., 2016; Baltes et al., 2010; Kalliath & Kalliath, 2014; Martinez-Sanchez et al., 2018). These might include

the flexibility to deal with family matters at work, work from home, or involvement in determining work hours. Family-friendly practices (e.g., nurseries, flexible work, parental leave) and high-performance work practices (e.g., job design, autonomy, job rotation) improve work-family balance and job satisfaction (Ronda et al., 2016). They have a positive effect on work-family enrichment and conflict, and resulting job satisfaction correlates with organizational commitment (Martinez-Sanchez et al., 2018). Work-family enrichment occurs when learning at work has a positive impact at home and family responsibilities motivate employees to excel in the workplace. Time, energy, and attention to responsibilities are finite; thus, conflict arises when these resources are in demand at both work and home (Baltes et al., 2010).

Individual differences may also account for the ability to manage work-life conflict. Workers high in polychronicity, or the ability to multitask, have more personal resources and resilience to manage work-family conflict (Conte et al., 2019). Monochronic workers, on the other hand, may need more work-family resources, such as scheduling flexibility, to lower stress and work-family conflict and prevent decreases in work engagement. Workers may feel resentment toward their organizations when they view their work as detracting from family life (Moore, 2000), thus the need for family-friendly workplace practices. Some suggest that organizations create work-family bundles that consist of approaches such as flextime, pooling hours, telework, and re-organizing schedules to support work-family enrichment and organizational commitment (Martinez-Sanchez et al., 2018).

Remote Work

Telework, a term reflecting any work arrangement outside the main office (Kurland & Bailey, 1999), is generally thought to increase motivation due to autonomy over how and when employees complete their work (Feldman & Gainey, 1997; Hill et al., 1998; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007) in keeping with motivational theories such as Hackman and Oldham's (1980) job characteristics model (e.g., see Feldman & Gainey, 1997; Moro et al., 2020). Such workers enjoy considerable trust, which increases positive perceptions of work-life balance and job satisfaction (Morganson et al., 2010). Research examining the work-life balance of employees in multiple locations (e.g., main office, client location, satellite office, home) showed that main office and home workers reported higher work-life balance (Morganson et al., 2010). Home workers reported higher job satisfaction than main-office workers but missed the social context. Flex time work increased intrinsic job satisfaction for European workers but did not affect extrinsic job aspects (Origo & Pagani, 2009). Functional flexibility, reflecting job aspects such as involvement, job rotation, autonomy, teamwork, and the use of multiple skills was linked to job satisfaction.

The term *telework* is largely being replaced with the terms *virtual* or *remote* work. Disadvantages of remote work include reduced task interdependence and social isolation, which may impede opportunities for affiliation (e.g., consider the three components of self-determination theory: relatedness, autonomy, competence; see Deci et al. 1999; Deci & Ryan, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Golden et al., 2008; Morganson et al., 2010; Siha & Monroe, 2006). Remote work can be implemented for cost-cutting reasons as well as to address work-life balance issues (Sparrow, 2000). However, it may also increase workload and related imbalance and stress (e.g., see Marsh & Musson, 2008; Russell et al., 2009; Towers et al., 2006).

The Great Resignation, which occurred as the U.S. was emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, resulted in 11 million job openings (Bauer & Dixit, 2021). An analysis of industry reports found that reasons for a large portion of the U.S. workforce wanting a job change was a desire to regain control over their personal lives (Bauer & Dixit, 2021; VerPlanck & Stewart, 2021). While some managers were able to shift from controlling their workforce during the pandemic to coaching them, others felt the need to exert more control, resulting in workers asserting their autonomy and choosing to resign.

Work Flexibility and Gender

Work flexibility variables such as working from home, work hours, schedule, and daily organization of work may impact job satisfaction differently for men and women. Despite assumptions that work-life balance, and scheduling flexibility in particular, is more salient to job satisfaction for women than men, research examining this issue using a global data set illustrated that work-life balance variables (e.g.,

working weekends, flexible scheduling) were more predictive of job satisfaction for men (Andrade et al., 2019). As such, intrinsic factors are not more relevant to job satisfaction for women than for men as established by some research (e.g., see Clark, 1997; Konrad et al., 2000; Zou, 2015). In a global study examining hospitality occupations, mean job satisfaction for females was lower than for men with some exceptions (e.g., hotel receptionists, housekeeping supervisors, hotel cleaners) (Andrade et al., 2021). Working weekends was more salient to women but work interfering with family was a negative predictor of job satisfaction for both genders, illustrating that work-balance factors are nuanced rather than aligning with gender stereotypes. A comparison of male and female workers in the public and private sectors found a positive impact of public sector work on satisfaction with flexibility and work hours for men while overall job satisfaction was higher for women (Puente & Sánchez- Sánchez, 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated flexible work and impacted women and men differently. Increased workloads resulted in greater burnout and stress for women as they not only performed work responsibilities at home but also met the care and educational needs of their families (Chung, 2020; Power, 2020). Globally, 70% of women reported negative changes in their daily routines and perceived these changes as slowing career progression (Deloitte, 2020). As women held jobs impacted by layoffs during the pandemic to a greater extent than men, their workforce representation dropped (Thompson, 2022). In contrast, men experienced benefits from flexible work such as increased productivity and pay, and more responsibilities, promotions, and leadership roles (Boston College for Work and Family, 2021; Rogers, 2020).

Women who work from home miss networking and relationship-building opportunities, which negatively impacts promotion (Partridge, 2021). Flexible work options, such as working from home, working fewer hours, part-time work, varying work hours teleworking, compressed work weeks, and role sharing may impact women more negatively than men (Thompson, 2022).

Benefits such as flexible scheduling to support caregiving and childcare as well as mental health services have been effective in increasing the representation of women in the workforce (McKinsey & Company, 2022). Flexibility in men's work schedules are also needed to equalize caregiving roles (Dey & O'Neil, 2021). In one study, co-worker relationships and flexibility to manage multiple roles were more important to job satisfaction for women academics than for men (Smagina, 2020). Top-performing companies in terms of female representation also offer career development, mentorship, and manager training on DEI, promotion, and workload boundaries, which suggests flexible scheduling and family-friendly policies. Supervisory support, concern over well-being, and sensitivity regarding work-family conflicts are integral to a family-friendly work culture (Beham & Drobic, 2010; Isfianadewi & Noordyani, 2020; Zhao & Ghiselli, 2016). Cultures focused on work-family enrichment where work contributes to improved family life increases job satisfaction (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Kalliath et al., 2020).

Insights From Theory

A number of organizational behavior theories account for factors that impact job satisfaction. A common theme across several of these theories is autonomy. Work flexibility is a component of autonomy; it entails control over factors such as how work hours are decided, hours worked, working weekends or evenings, working from home, how daily work is organized, the extent to which work interferes with family, and flexibility to deal with family matters. For example, self-employed workers enjoy more flexibility and autonomy than salaried workers, which accounts for variations in job satisfaction between these categories of workers (Alvarez & Sinde-Cantorna, 2013; Benz & Frey, 2008). Having autonomy over where and how one works is a top motivator for seeking a new job (McKinsey & Company, 2022).

A brief review of key motivation theories that entail autonomy follows:

- *Herzberg's two-factor theory* accounts for factors that motivate and contribute to job satisfaction, or *motivator* factors, and a separate set of factors that contribute to job dissatisfaction, referred to as *hygiene* factors (Herzberg, 1964, 1969; Herzberg et al., 1959). Examples of motivators are achievement, recognition, responsibility, the nature of the job, advancement, and growth while hygiene factors encompass the work environment, coworker relations, policies and rules, supervision, and salary. Managers need to address both types of

factors. They need to improve conditions causing dissatisfaction and create conditions that motivate. Work flexibility fits into both categories. It can be a motivator in the sense of a work culture that trusts employees and gives them responsibility for when and how work occurs and a dissatisfier if policies and rules are restrictive in terms of work hours and schedules.

- *Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics model* focuses on core job characteristics, one of which is autonomy, or the degree to which employees control how and when they work, how they perform tasks, and the level of responsibility and accountability they have for their work (Hackman & Oldham, 1967, 1980). The outcomes of autonomy, along with other core job characteristics such as skill variety, task identity, task significance, and feedback are posited to result in internal work motivation, high growth satisfaction, high general job satisfaction, and high work effectiveness. In the context of flexibility, autonomy as described in this model would entail determining work hours, where to work, when to work, and the ability to meet family needs, all of which would result in positive work outcomes for the employer and motivation and job satisfaction for the employee. Job design influences morale, motivation, work life quality, and involvement, and as such, impacts organizational performance and reduces turnover (Korunka et al., 2008). It may also strengthen social relationships among employees as they collaborate on new processes (Petrou et al., 2018), thereby supporting connectedness (e.g., see self-determination theory; Deci et al. 1999; Deci & Ryan, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020).
- *McGregor's theory X and theory Y* describes two management approaches (McGregor, 1960). A theory X manager believes that employees naturally dislike work and need strict supervision whereas a theory Y manager assumes employees enjoy responsibility and take pride in their work and thus need minimal supervision. A theory Y manager would be more likely to create autonomous and flexible working conditions.
- *Self-determination theory* is based on the belief that people seek growth and well-being, which are accentuated by autonomy and responsibility (Deci et al. 1999; Deci & Ryan, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020). The theory identifies three innate and universal psychological needs: *competence* (effectiveness in one's environment), *connectedness* (close relationships with others), and *autonomy* (freedom over one's life). In the work environment, autonomy over scheduling, work hours, and work conditions would, therefore, contribute to job satisfaction and strong job performance as employees' needs are met.
- *Motivation 3.0* indicates that when employees have the autonomy to engage in enjoyable work and can direct their own work, creativity and innovation increase (Pink, 2009). Motivation 3.0 consists of three components: *autonomy*, or the ability to control what, when, how, and with whom one works; *mastery*, or the desire to challenge oneself, improve, learn, and practice; and *purpose*, which emphasizes understanding organizational goals and working toward meaningful aims that engage minds and hearts.

Organizational climate, and related supervisor behaviors, is critical to improving job satisfaction. Motivation theories provide insights into employees' need for autonomy, which has a positive impact on job performance and innovation (e.g., see Mas-Machuca et al., 2016; Matijaš et al., 2018; Pink, 2009; Ronda et al., 2016). Management approaches that reflect the theories outlined lead to positive outcomes. Flexible work is a motivator rather than a dissatisfier; theory Y managers trust their employees to be responsible and work independently; growth and well-being are realized through autonomy; and innovation is accentuated when workers have control to direct their efforts and engage their skills. Managers who support employees through work flexibility and autonomy in decision making enhance employee work-life balance and job satisfaction (Mas-Machuca et al., 2016; Nadeem & Abbas, 2009; Wu & Zhou, 2022). Job autonomy is correlated with family-work balance (e.g., see Chen, 2017; Wegman et al., 2018; Wu & Zhou, 2022). Workers need to see value and purpose in their jobs, have autonomy over their tasks, and feel pride in their performance. Job design and a shift from fixed work arrangements, and particularly those that meet family needs, is particularly critical for today's generations of workers.

Research Model and Hypotheses

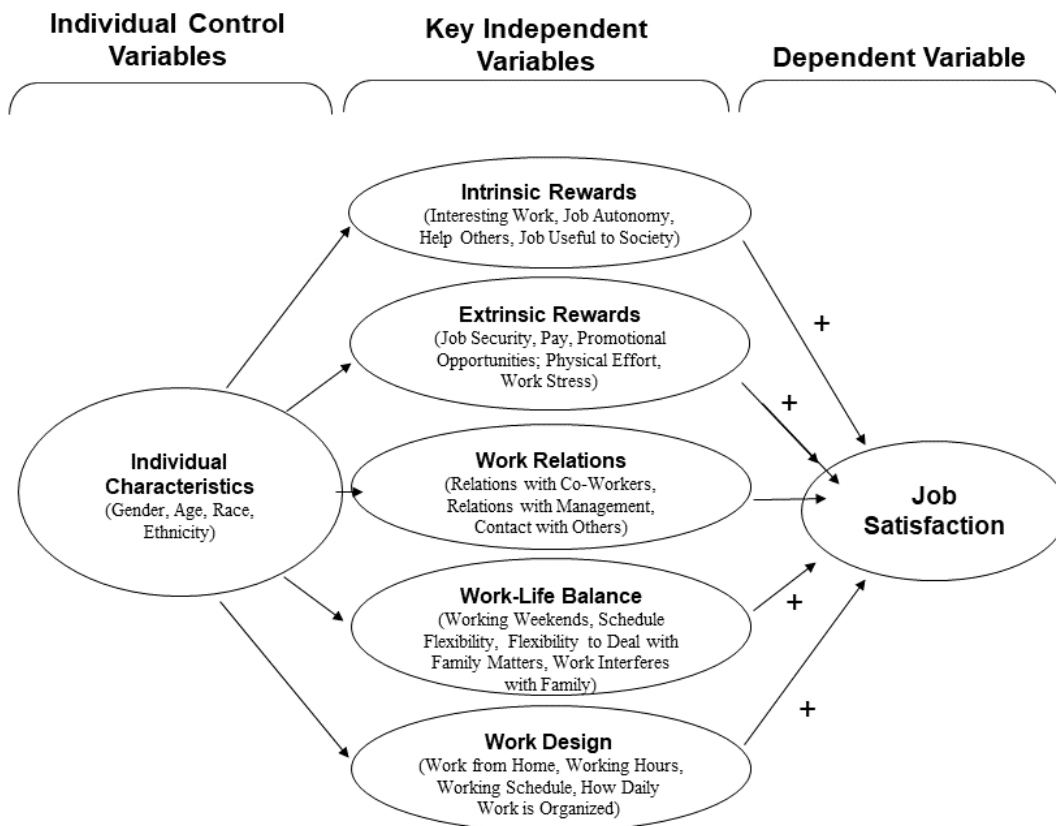
Various empirical studies have shown that women generally experience greater job satisfaction than men (Roxburgh, 1999; Clark, 1997; Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza, 2000; Bender et al., 2005). However, other studies have found no such differences, especially when taking into account relevant workplace and organizational factors (Bokemeier & William, 1987; Mobley et al., 1994; Fields & Blum, 1997; Westover, 2009). Given this ongoing debate, the present study aims to develop a theoretical model (see Figure 1) that consolidates the existing literature on the key determinants of job satisfaction and sheds light on the factors that influence workers’ experiences and overall job satisfaction. Notably, we will include a gender variable in our analysis to investigate the similarities and differences in the determinants of job satisfaction across genders.

Based on our literature review, we hypothesize:

H1: Both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards will significantly affect the overall perceived job satisfaction of both male and female workers.

H2: Work flexibility determinants will be strong predictors of job satisfaction, but less predictive than intrinsic and extrinsic rewards and work relations variables.

**FIGURE 1
FACTORS INFLUENCING WORK CHARACTERISTICS AND JOB SATISFACTION**



Research Design and Methodology

Drawing inspiration from the International Social Survey Work Orientations Module, a comprehensive survey tool was devised to investigate the evolving landscape of the labor market amid and post the COVID-19 pandemic. The questionnaire encompassed a diverse array of factors, including intrinsic and extrinsic variables, workplace relationships, and work-life equilibrium. Our research team employed a stratified random sampling technique to distribute the survey across the United States during the summer of 2022, culminating in 766 surveys that were fully completed.

Operationalization of Variables

We operationalized the study variables using items from the ISSP Survey Work Orientations Module (2015) and demographic questions. In Table 1, we report the measures for all variables.

TABLE 1
KEY CHARACTERISTICS RELATED TO JOB SATISFACTION

Variable	Survey Item
<i>Dependent Variable</i>	
Job Satisfaction	“How satisfied are you in your main job?”
<i>Intrinsic Rewards</i>	
Interesting Job	“My job is interesting.”
Job Autonomy	“I can work independently.”
Help Others	“In my job I can help other people.”
Job Useful to Society	“My job is useful to society.”
<i>Extrinsic Rewards</i>	
Pay	“My income is high.”
Job Security	“My job is secure.”
Promotional Opportunities	“My opportunities for advancement are high.”
Physical Effort	“How often do you have to do hard physical work?”
Work Stress	“How often do you find your work stressful?”
<i>Work Relations</i>	
Management-Employee Relations	“In general, how would you describe relations at your workplace between management and employees?”
Coworker Relations	“In general, how would you describe relations at your workplace between workmates/colleagues?”
Contact with Others	“In my job, I have personal contact with others.”
<i>Work-Life Balance</i>	
Work Weekends	“How often does your job involve working weekends?”
Schedule Flexibility	“Which of the following best describes how your working hours are decided (times you start and finish your work)?”
Flexibility to Deal with Family Matters	“How difficult would it be for you to take an hour or two off during work hours, to take care of personal or family matters?”
Work Interferes with Family	“How often do you feel that the demands of your job interfere with your family?”

Variable	Survey Item
Family Interferes with Work	“How often do you feel that the demands of your family interfere with your job?”
<i>Work Design</i>	
Work from Home	“How often do you work at home during your normal work hours?”
Work Hours Decided	“Which of the following statements BEST describe how your working hours are decided?”
Working Schedule	“Which of the following statements best describes your usual working schedule in your main job?”
How Daily Work is Organized	“Which of the following statements best describes how your daily work is organized?”
<i>Individual Characteristics</i>	Age, gender, race, and ethnicity

Statistical Methodology

In our analysis of work orientation and job satisfaction data from respondents, we adopted a multi-step methodology. To begin, we conducted bivariate and multivariate analyses on work characteristics and attitudes, with a focus on gender differences. Our analytical methods included correlations, cross-tabulations, ANOVA and ANCOVA procedures, as well as descriptive statistics for the entire sample. Subsequently, we employed OLS and ordered probit regression models to investigate how individual work characteristics and attitudes affect job satisfaction differently for men and women, with a particular focus on work flexibility variables.

RESULTS

Demographics

In Utah and other parts of the US, a modal stratified random sample involving 766 respondents was conducted. The participants were employed either full-time or part-time before the COVID-19 pandemic and were employed at the time of the study. Of the total sample, 49.1% were male, and 50.3% were female. While most respondents were employed full-time, women had a higher percentage of part-time employment compared to men. The study also focused on women’s experiences in Utah, which constituted approximately 39% of the sample, while the remaining 61% of the sample comprised participants from 42 different US states.

The study collected information on the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the respondents. White or Caucasian respondents constituted 51.4% of the sample, while 21% were Black or African American, 17.5% were Asian, and 1% were Native American or Alaska Native. The remaining 5.6% identified as “other,” and less than 1% chose not to report their race. In terms of ethnicity, 77% of the respondents were not Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin, while 23% were. Female respondents had greater ethnic diversity, while male respondents had greater racial diversity. These findings are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

TABLE 2
ETHNICITY PERCENTAGE BY CATEGORY AND GENDER, 2022

VARIABLE	Female	Male	All
Not Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin	71.17	82.98	76.89
Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin	28.83	17.02	23.11
Total	100%	100%	100%

TABLE 3
RACE PERCENTAGE BY CATEGORY AND GENDER, 2022

VARIABLE	Female	Male	All
White or Caucasian	61.56	40.69	51.44
Black or African American	20.26	23.67	21.8
Asian	8.05	27.39	17.49
Native American or Alaska Native	1.56	0.53	1.04
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1.56	1.86	1.7
Other	6.49	4.79	5.61
Prefer Not to Say	0.52	1.06	0.91
Total	100%	100%	100%

Table 4 below shows the age categories of the respondents. Younger Millennial or GenZ workers accounted for roughly 18.6% of the respondents, while younger GenX or older Millennial workers made up approximately 56% of the respondents. Older GenX workers constituted about 16% of the respondents, while Baby Boomer or Silent Generation workers accounted for approximately 9.5% of the respondents. It was observed that female workers were generally younger than male workers.

TABLE 4
AGE PERCENTAGE BY CATEGORY AND GENDER, 2022

VARIABLE	Female	Male	All
16-20	2.6	1.6	2.09
21-30	28.83	17.02	23.11
31-40	27.27	34.57	30.81
41-50	21.30	21.28	21.41
51-60	14.29	16.22	15.14
61-70	4.16	7.98	6.01
71-80	1.30	0.80	1.04
>80	0.26	0.53	0.39
Total	100%	100%	100%

Descriptive Results

The job satisfaction means and other main study variables, by gender, are presented in Table 5. While no significant statistical difference exists in the reported job satisfaction or many other main study variables between male and female respondents, several noteworthy differences are evident in various variables. Female workers report higher levels of helping others in their work, lower pay, and less physical work when compared to their male counterparts. These findings are consistent with previous research examining gender differences in job satisfaction and job characteristics, as reported in Bokemeier & William (1987), Blau & Kahn (1992), Mobley et al. (1994), Clark (1997), Konrad et al. (2000), Donohue & Heywood (2004), and Westover (2009).

TABLE 5
MEAN JOB SATISFACTION OF MAIN STUDY VARIABLES BY GENDER, 2015

VARIABLE	Female	Male	All
Job Satisfaction	7.25	7.22	7.23
Interesting Work	3.84	3.68	3.76
Job Autonomy	3.99	3.89	3.94
Help Others	4.20	3.94	4.08
Job Useful to Society	4.10	3.97	4.03
Job Security	3.96	3.89	3.92
Pay	2.83	3.15	2.99
Promotional Opportunities	3.26	3.23	3.24
Physical Work	2.56	2.90	2.72
Stressful Work	3.32	3.20	3.27
Personal Contact with Others	4.10	4.00	4.05
Relations with Management	3.78	3.73	3.75
Relations with Coworkers	4.01	4.02	4.01
Flexibility to Deal with Family Matters	2.22	2.16	2.19
Work Interferes with Family	1.71	1.78	1.75
Family Interferes with Work	1.59	1.62	1.61
Working Weekends	2.97	3.04	3.01
Work from Home	2.59	2.54	2.57
Working Hours Decided	1.56	1.63	1.59
Working Schedule	1.29	1.35	1.32
How Daily Work is Organized	1.94	1.87	1.91

A Focus on Work Flexibility Variables

This study makes a specific contribution by examining how work flexibility variables impact job satisfaction. While many previous studies have explored various intrinsic, extrinsic, and workplace relations variables, few have investigated work flexibility. Table 6 displays the mean scores of work flexibility variables by gender and for all respondents. Additionally, a Chi-squared test and significance level of each work flexibility variable and job satisfaction was run. Finally, an ANOVA procedure for each work flexibility variable and job satisfaction was run, with the adjusted r-squared being reported. Figures 2 – 9 below further explore the relationship of each work flexibility variable with job satisfaction.

Figure 2 shows a clear linear relationship between flexibility to deal with family matters and worker job satisfaction—with mean scores steadily increasing for those who have less difficulty to address family issues when they arise and may interfere with work.

TABLE 6
WORK FLEXIBILITY VARIABLE MEANS AND IMPACTS ON JOB SATISFACTION

Work Flexibility Variable	Male Mean Score	Female Mean Score	Overall Mean Score	Pearson chi2 (with Job Satisfaction)	ANOVA Adj. R-Squared (with Job Satisfaction)
Flexibility to Deal with Family Matters	2.16	2.22	2.19	80.57***	0.058
Work Interferes with Family	1.78	1.71	1.75	166.29***	0.090
Family Interferes with Work	1.62	1.59	1.61	45.44***	0.008
Working Weekends	3.04	2.97	3.01	36.23	0.000
Work from Home	2.54	2.59	2.57	58.04*	0.003
Working Hours Decided	1.63	1.56	1.59	27.60	0.011
Working Schedule	1.35	1.29	1.32	28.76	0.000
How Daily Work is Organized	1.87	1.94	1.91	40.98**	0.004

Level of significance: * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$

FIGURE 2
JOB SATISFACTION MEAN SCORES: FLEXIBILITY TO DEAL WITH FAMILY MATTERS

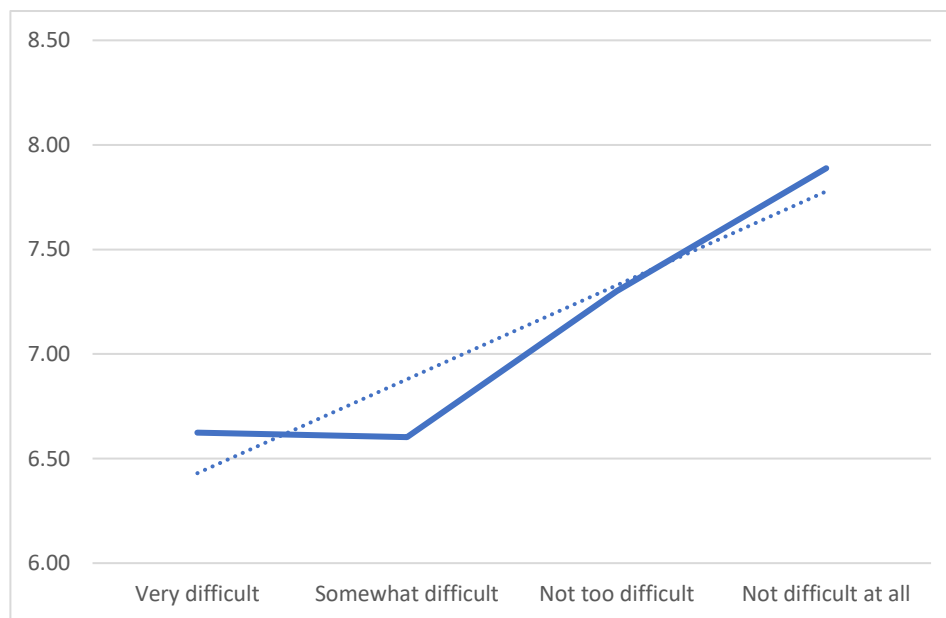


Figure 3 shows an interesting J-curve in the relationship between family interferes with work and worker job satisfaction—while those that don't experience family interference with work have the highest

job satisfaction, those that always have family interference have higher satisfaction levels than those who sometimes deal with those interruptions.

FIGURE 3
JOB SATISFACTION MEAN SCORES: FAMILY INTERFERES WITH WORK

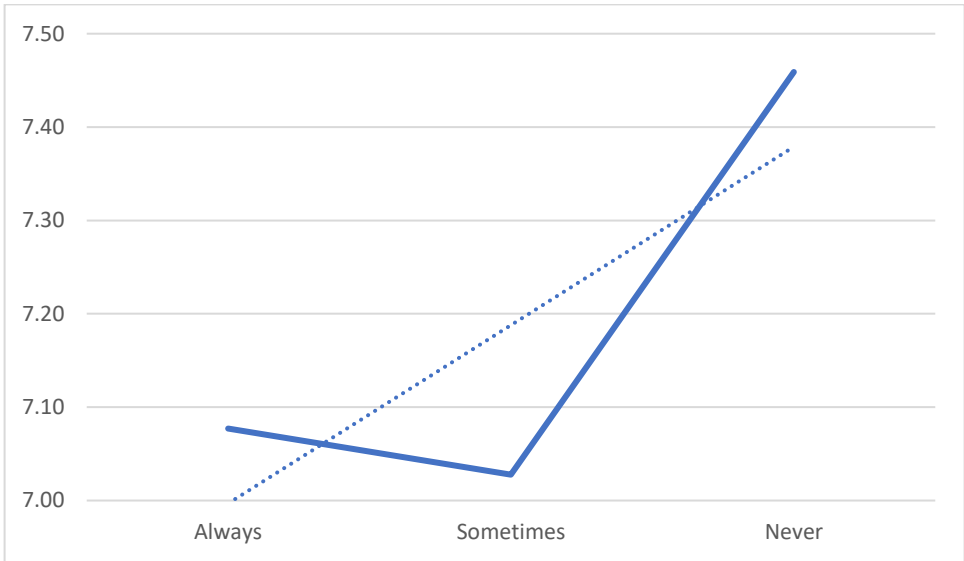


Figure 4 shows a clear linear relationship between work interfering with family and worker job satisfaction—with mean scores steadily increasing for those who less frequently have to deal with work that interferes with their family life.

FIGURE 4
JOB SATISFACTION MEAN SCORES: WORK INTERFERES WITH FAMILY

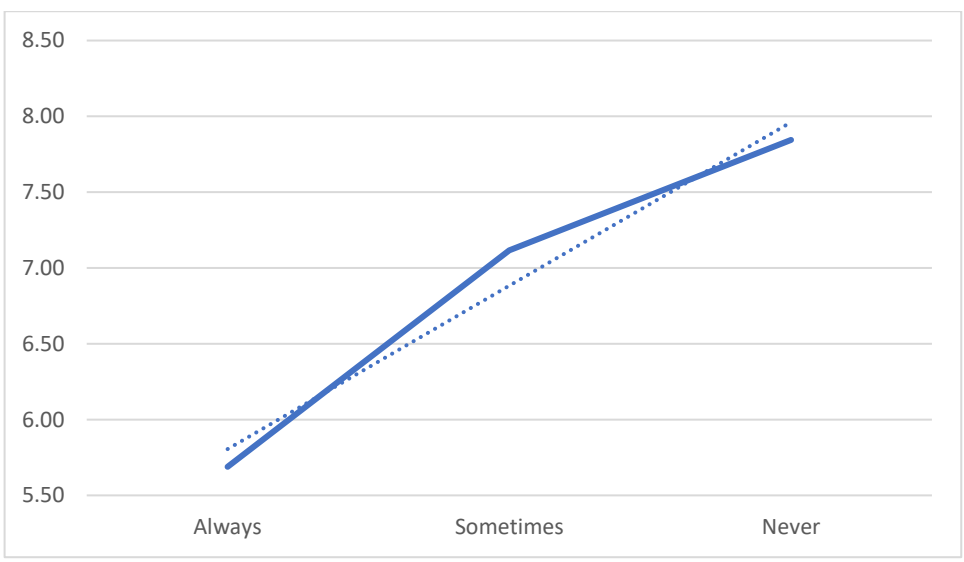


Figure 5 shows a clear linear relationship between working weekends and worker job satisfaction—with mean scores steadily increasing for those who less frequently have to work on weekends.

FIGURE 5
JOB SATISFACTION MEAN SCORES: WORKING WEEKENDS

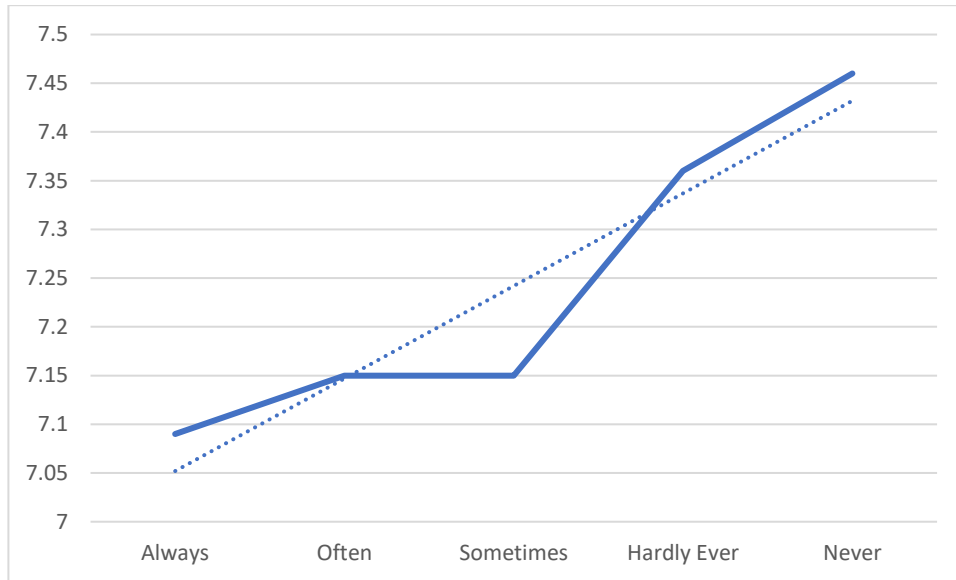


Figure 6 shows an interesting relationship between working from home and worker job satisfaction—those who always work from home are more satisfied than those who never work from home, while those who often work from home win the day, with the highest job satisfaction overall.

FIGURE 6
JOB SATISFACTION MEAN SCORES: WORK FROM HOME

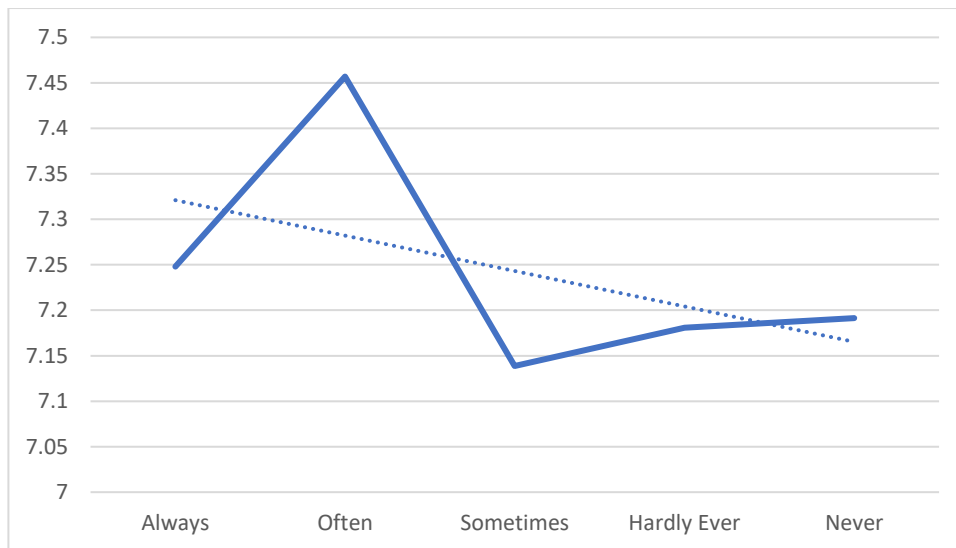


Figure 7 shows a clear linear relationship between how working hours are decided and worker job satisfaction—with mean scores steadily decreasing for those who have less autonomy of their work schedules.

FIGURE 7
JOB SATISFACTION MEAN SCORES: WORKING HOURS DECIDED

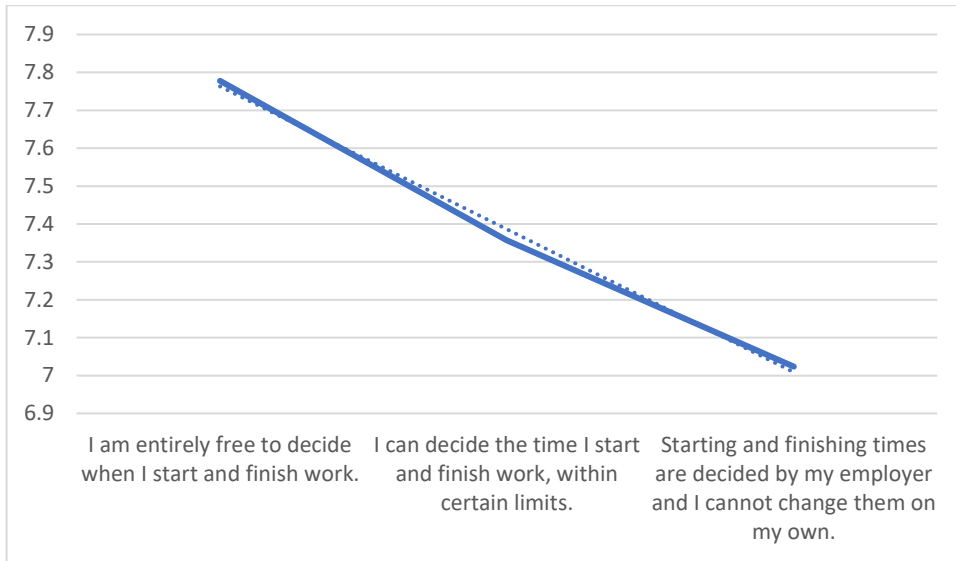
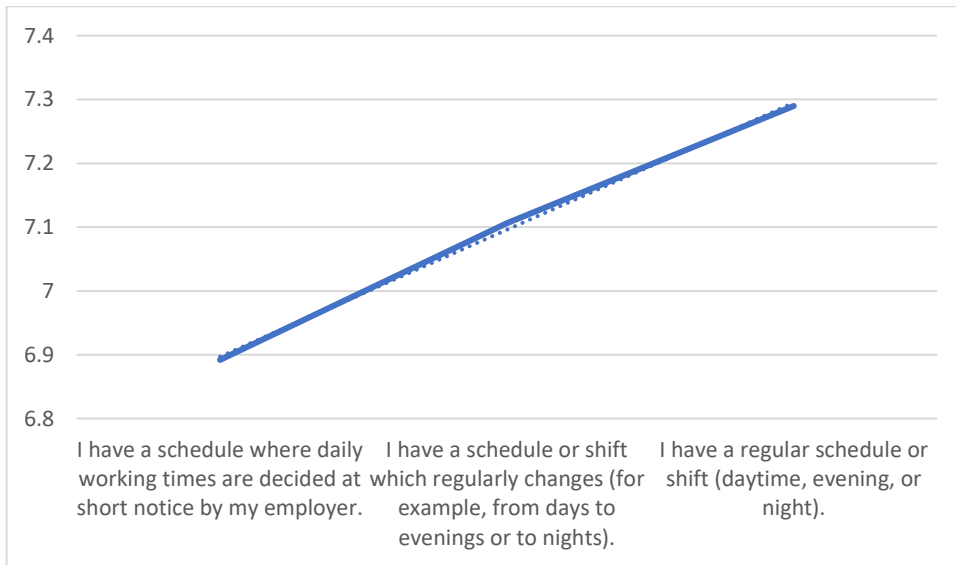


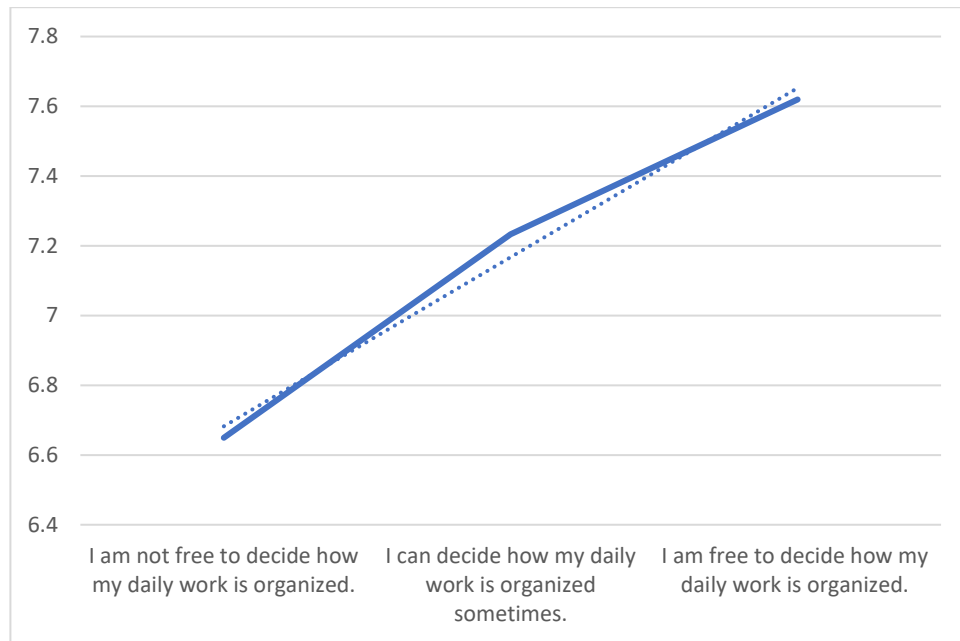
Figure 8 shows a clear linear relationship between working scheduling and worker job satisfaction—with mean scores steadily increasing for those who have less volatility in their work schedules.

FIGURE 8
JOB SATISFACTION MEAN SCORES: WORKING SCHEDULE



Finally, Figure 9 shows a clear linear relationship between how daily work is organized and worker job satisfaction—with mean scores steadily increasing for those who have more autonomy in how they their daily work is organized.

FIGURE 9
JOB SATISFACTION MEAN SCORES: HOW DAILY WORK IS ORGANIZED



Regression Results

We constructed an OLS model based on a theoretical framework, following the method used by Andrade and Westover (2018a, 2018b, 2019; Andrade, Westover, & Kupka, 2019; Andrade, Westover, & Peterson, 2019). The model consists of seven sub-models: Model 1 includes all control variables, while Models 2 to 6 include variables related to intrinsic rewards, extrinsic rewards, work relations, work-life balance, and work design, respectively. Model 7 is a combination of all key independent variables and control variables, which we used to predict job satisfaction. In individual control models and Models 2 to 6, most variables were statistically significant ($p < .001$). The combined model had the highest predictability, explaining almost 50% of the variation in job satisfaction.

We ran the combined model on both male and female workers and found significant variation in standardized beta coefficient statistical significance for each job characteristic and control variable. The adjusted r-squared value was higher for male workers (0.517) compared to female workers (0.466), indicating that our model explained nearly 52% of the variation in job satisfaction among male workers and nearly 47% among female workers. We found that some job characteristics were significant predictors of job satisfaction for one gender but not the other. For example, job autonomy, promotional opportunities, and physical effort were significant for female job satisfaction but not for male job satisfaction. In contrast, job security, relations with coworkers, working weekends, working from home, and ethnicity were significant for male workers but not for female workers. Stressful work was significant for both genders, but the beta coefficient and level of significance were higher for male workers. Overall, work interfering with family was the strongest of the work flexibility variables in predicting worker job satisfaction.

We observed that many of the statistically significant variables for all workers were not significant for the male and female-specific models. This may be partly due to the small sample size of each gender-specific model, but we also found clear differences in the predictors of job satisfaction between male and female workers.

TABLE 6
OLS REGRESSION RESULTS OF JOB SATISFACTION AND MAIN STUDY VARIABLES,
BY GENDER, 2022

VARIABLE	Female	Male	All
Interesting Work	0.224***	0.242***	0.239***
Job Autonomy	0.078*	-0.017	0.033
Help Others	-0.003	0.019	0.002
Job Useful to Society	0.028	0.029	0.024
Job Security	0.028	0.083*	0.054
Pay	0.073	0.076	0.072*
Promotional Opportunities	0.114*	0.075	0.093**
Physical Work	0.082*	0.094	0.082**
Stressful Work	-0.083*	-0.18***	-0.115***
Personal Contact with Others	0.070	0.017	0.059*
Relations with Management	0.252***	0.227***	0.247***
Relations with Coworkers	0.053	0.099*	0.074*
Flexibility to Deal with Family Matters	0.019	-0.056	-0.017
Work Interferes with Family	-0.175***	-0.142**	-0.161***
Family Interferes with Work	0.067	-0.002	0.041
Working Weekends	-0.046	0.079*	0.006
Work from Home	-0.040	0.082*	0.000
Working Hours Decided	0.039	-0.037	-0.002
Working Schedule	-0.002	-0.011	-0.009
How Daily Work is Organized	-0.026	0.033	-0.017
Ethnicity	-0.003	0.084*	0.032
Race	0.059	0.012	0.042
Age	0.098**	0.145***	0.115***
<i>N</i>	385	376	766
ADJ. R-SQUARED	0.466	0.517	0.495
<i>F</i>	15.61***	18.46***	33.56***

Beta Values; Level of significance: * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$

Revisiting Hypotheses

There was mixed support for H1 (Both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards will significantly affect the overall perceived job satisfaction of both male and female workers): interesting work was the only statistically significant intrinsic factor, with all but job security being significant extrinsic factors. Additionally, there was mixed support for H2 (Work flexibility determinants will be strong predictors of job satisfaction, but less predictive than intrinsic and extrinsic rewards and work relations variables): work interferes with family was the only strong work flexibility predictor of job satisfaction in the overall model, which has a larger standardized beta coefficient than each of the extrinsic variables except stressful work, while interesting work (intrinsic reward) had the largest standardized beta coefficient of the entire model.

DISCUSSION

Work Flexibility and Job Satisfaction

While there was overall mixed support regarding the effect of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards on job satisfaction, this study notes a clear relationship between work flexibility and job satisfaction. In the case of work-life balance, job satisfaction increases with greater flexibility to deal with family matters instead of work and family interfering with each other. These findings align with previous research on the importance of family-friendly policies to reduce obstacles that detract from family life (Adisa et al., 2016; Andreassi, 2014; Baltes et al., 2010; Kalliath & Kalliath, 2014; Martinez-Sanchez et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2000). Findings also highlight the importance of schedule flexibility (choosing when to start and end work) to enhance job satisfaction (McKinsey & Company, 2022). McGregor's theory X and theory Y applies these findings on a leadership level, stressing the importance for managers to assume that employees take pride in their work, enjoy responsibility, and need minimal supervision (McGregor, 1960). Employees who feel they have work flexibility and are trusted by management experience greater job satisfaction, increased job performance, and are more innovative (Mas-Machuca et al., 2016; Matijaš et al., 2018; Pink, 2009; Ronda et al., 2016).

Another component of work flexibility is work design. Participants in this study indicated that the greatest job satisfaction came from the opportunity to work often from home, but not always work from home. Morganson et al. (2010) found that remote and main office workers had higher job satisfaction compared to client and satellite office locations, but both main and remote locations have their disadvantages. Main office workers may feel as if they have less flexibility and autonomy over where they work (Alvarez & Sinde-Cantorna, 2013; Benz & Frey, 2008; McKinsey & Company, 2022). Remote workers miss the social context of an office and may experience an increased workload due to technology enabled constant access to work and higher levels of stress (Marsh & Musson, 2008; Mellner, 2016; Origo & Pagani, 2009; Russell et al., 2009; Towers et al., 2006). A key to job satisfaction seems to be a combination of working from home, while at times, also working from a main office. This structure provides the social context of a main office while also providing the autonomy and flexibility that comes from working remotely (Bauer & Dixit, 2021; VerPlanck & Stewart, 2021). Findings align with Herzberg's two-factor theory and Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics model which both emphasize the importance of job and employment designs that provide motivating factors to increase effectiveness, creativity, job performance, motivation, and job satisfaction (Hackman & Oldham, 1967, 1980; Herzberg, 1964, 1969; Herzberg et al., 1959; Korunka et al., 2008).

The results of this study also align with findings on the relationship between work schedules and job satisfaction (Alvarez & Sinde-Cantorna, 2013; Benz & Frey, 2008; McKinsey & Company, 2022). Workers with a regular schedule and the autonomy to organize daily work activities have higher levels of job satisfaction. Several key motivational theories including the self-determination theory, Herzberg's two-factor theory, Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics model, and motivation 3.0 highlight the importance of organizational cultures, leadership, and management that value employees' need for autonomy (Deci et al. 1999; Deci & Ryan, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020; Hackman & Oldham, 1967, 1980; Pink, 2009). When workers have greater stability regarding when they work and how to organize their work, autonomy increases resulting in enhanced creativity, innovation, job performance, motivation, effectiveness, and job satisfaction.

Job Satisfaction and Gender

In this study, some job characteristics were significant predictors of job satisfaction for both males and females. Job characteristics of interesting work, stressful work, relations with management, and work interfering with family were significant for both genders. These findings align with the spillover theory that addresses the interrelated components of work and family (Frischman, 2009). While females experienced greater burnout and stress from the COVID-19 pandemic, environments that are stressful, roles that are not interesting, management relations that are poor, and work that interferes with family results in decreased job satisfaction for males and females. These factors spillover into employees' personal lives and can reduce

life satisfaction and increase feelings of overload (Chung, 2020; McDaniel et al., 2021; Power, 2020). It is vital for leadership to establish organizational cultures that promote intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, opportunities to develop positive work relations with management, and opportunities for flexibility to deal with family matters.

Leadership should also understand that there are some job characteristics that have different influences on females and males. In this study, female respondents rated job autonomy, promotional opportunities, and physical work as significant factors regarding job satisfaction. Autonomy and promotional opportunities are key intrinsic and extrinsic rewards and job characteristics for females that enhance overall job satisfaction (Hackman & Oldham, 1967, 1980; Puente & Sánchez- Sánchez, 2019). In addition, females who have greater access to autonomy and promotional opportunities find enhanced career development and promotions, leading to greater organizational diversity and often improved organizational performance (Zhao & Ghiselli, 2016). Findings also align with Pink's (2009) motivation 3.0 theory which stresses the importance of autonomy, mastery, and purpose to improve job satisfaction. The one finding of this study that has not been addressed extensively in previous literature is the extrinsic job characteristic of physical work and job satisfaction for females. It may be that generally, for females in the US, greater job satisfaction is a result of a role that has lower physical effort. Further research is needed to address this topic.

For males, significant components of job satisfaction are job security, relations with coworkers, weekend work, and working from home. Weekend work and work flexibility (working from home) align with previous findings of these predictive indicators of job satisfaction in men (Andrade et al., 2019; Puente & Sánchez- Sánchez, 2019). In this study, coworker relations were a significant predictor of job satisfaction for males. Previous literature varies in support of this finding. Smagina (2020) found no significant relationship between coworker relations and job satisfaction for males while Roxburgh (1999) found that coworker support was important in male job satisfaction. Differences in the literature may be due to different sample sizes and demographics. Despite literature differences, the self-determination theory points out that people seek connections with others to enhance well-being (Deci et al. 1999; Deci & Ryan, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020). Having close relationships is a significant component of job satisfaction.

Application for Organizational Leadership

This study provides insight into components of work flexibility that improve job satisfaction along with similarities and differences of job characteristics that improve job satisfaction for males and females. Knowing key elements of job satisfaction is valuable for leadership, but if not implemented, this knowledge serves little purpose. The following are general recommendations on how to implement the study findings.

- *Find ways to promote work-life balance:* Leadership needs to periodically assess and review policies and the organizational culture around areas such as maternity and paternity leave, time off, mental health days, sick days, dealing with unexpected family matters, and expected start and end times of work. Based on data-driven assessments and employee feedback, leadership should drive appropriate changes and/or support current policies and organizational culture that promotes work-life balance.
- *Align work design with organizational goals and purpose:* The need for employees to be in a main office varies based on industry and roles. With each role in an organization, considerations should be made on work design. If employees are entirely remote, leadership and management should find periodic ways to connect with employees and encourage collaboration among team members. Leadership may also want to establish policies and a culture that encourages employees to step away from work outside of work hours. For those who work in a main office, flexibility in work location may be beneficial. This can be accomplished by providing the option to work remotely one or more days a week to provide the opportunity for schedule flexibility.
- *Assess autonomy and work schedules:* Leadership can assess and encourage appropriate autonomy around when and how employees work. In many positions, employees should have the flexibility to personally organize their daily work with little to no micromanagement from management and leadership. General guidelines and policies should be established to set and

maintain organizational, human resources, and legal expectations while employees direct how they structure their work to fulfill their roles.

- *Consider individual needs:* Employees experience job satisfaction when their work has the following key independent variables: intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, positive work relations, some form of work-life balance, and aspects of work design. A one-size approach of each key independent variable may not work for all employees and organizations. Leaders should consider what their organization can and will support with each key variable along with seeking employee feedback on meaningful rewards and work design. Organizational assessment combined with employee feedback can allow organizations to create, improve, and sustain job satisfaction while also factoring in financial, economic, and consumer influences. The specific key elements implemented in one organization may vary compared to that of another organization.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This study supports previous literature regarding important elements for job satisfaction on the organizational and role-specific levels. While this paper adds insight into job satisfaction factors associated with work flexibility and the role of gender, further research is needed to elaborate upon these findings. This can be accomplished with further research that expands upon understanding and clarifying drivers of job satisfaction for males and females and including those who do not identify as males or females. In addition, respondents to this study were only located in the US. Additional research will expand upon the geographic scope and ensure enhanced representation from numerous perspectives. In this study, consideration should be given to the single-response study design. Participant feedback was a one-time response in the summer of 2022. Feedback may have been influenced by the current state of the US economy, the COVID-19 pandemic, and personal needs at the time of the survey. Additional research including longitudinal studies will provide a broader perspective regarding the effects of economic, political, and personal factors on job satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

Predictive factors of job satisfaction among employees can be nuanced and based on factors such as organizational culture, roles, employee backgrounds, and genders. Despite nuances, there are overarching factors that are valuable for leadership to consider when it comes to improving job satisfaction. Workers who have greater autonomy, work flexibility, interesting work, positive relations with management, and lower stress are more engaged and productive. Leaders and managers should assess and communicate the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards they are able to offer employees along with creating a culture of positive work relations, work-life balance, and work design. Leadership must evaluate and support policies that improve work flexibility, support a positive and healthy organizational culture, allow for role autonomy, and provide intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Leaders who integrate these key variables into their organization see improvements in overall employee performance, increases in productivity, and enhanced organizational commitment among employees (Cai et al., 2019; Cherif, 2020; Harrison et al., 2006; Judge et al., 2001; Riketta, 2008; Shuck et al., 2011). These outcomes drive the importance for organizations to understand and enhance organizational and work characteristics that contribute to job satisfaction.

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