

The Relationship Between Flexible Work Arrangements and Employee Performance in a Selected Zimbabwean University: The Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Support.

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ABSTRACT

Many higher learning institutions in Zimbabwe have implemented Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) following the health crisis ushered in by the COVID-19 pandemic. The efficacy of implementing this strategy hinges on the level of support provided by the organization towards these activities. This study aims to investigate the mediating role of perceived organizational support on the relationship between FWAs and employee performance in the academic workplace. The study utilized the quantitative research approach and employed a correlational research methodology. Using stratified sampling the population was divided into two strata: administration staff and academic staff. A sample size of 250 respondents was selected from the two strata using simple random sampling to collect data using a questionnaire. The data was analyzed using SPSS Version 30.0, inferential statistics and Andrew Hayes Process was used to test the mediation. Findings of the study indicated that perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between flexible work arrangements and employee performance. Universities are recommended to provide support systems to employees on flexible work arrangements to attain competitive advantage.

Keywords: COVID-19, flexible working arrangements, employee performance, perceived organizational support, university

INTRODUCTION

The global COVID-19 epidemic in 2020 had a profound impact on the entire world, leading to a critical juncture for every component of the higher education system, jeopardizing their sustainability and existence. The abrupt closure of educational institutions in reaction to COVID-19 has led to swift and significant transitions to the adoption of flexible working arrangements (FWAs) worldwide, as numerous governments enforced different degrees of lockdown measures (UNESCO, 2021). The implementation of FWAs was expedited, leaving institutions with limited time to make sufficient preparations (Oluka et al., 2023). Flexible work arrangements mean allowing employees to work from specific locations and during certain hours to meet their objectives and responsibilities (Karimi, 2019). Prior to the pandemic, organizations implemented FWAs primarily for the sake of convenience and to create a favorable working environment. Nevertheless, the quarantine and stay-at-home mandates compelled organizations to use FWAs as a means to address employee productivity during times of crisis.

Several signs indicate that employees expressed a preference for the continuation of this "new norm" after the epidemic (Iometrics and Global Workplace Analytics (GWA), 2020). The study conducted by Masuda et al. (2013) focused on how FWAs might effectively tackle the problems of excessive job demands and employee stress resulting from work-life conflicts. According to prior research, FWAs provide employees with the benefit of having flexibility in their work design. This leads to enhanced organizational flexibility, greater work-life balance, and increased organizational performance (Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014).

Higher education institutions, like other organizations, have also adopted FWAs as an alternative to traditional work techniques. This shift has been supported by key stakeholders, including academics and administration members. Flexible schedules are commonly implemented in higher education, allowing academics to select their preferred timetables based on their expectations and availability (Du Plessis, 2019). Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the FWAs played a crucial role in facilitating distance education by addressing various obstacles. The primary objectives were to ensure timely program completion and adequately prepare for final examinations (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2021).

Flexible work arrangements have gained prominence among firms globally as a means to enhance employee health and performance. Research indicates that flexible work arrangements, including remote work and adaptable scheduling, enhance employee engagement, job satisfaction, and performance by facilitating the balance between professional and personal responsibilities while reducing stress levels (Yamin & Pusparini, 2022; Stella & Iheriohanma, 2020; Hashmi et al., 2021). Perceived organisational support is a crucial component of this process. In a university setting, research conducted at public universities in Kenya and Egypt demonstrates that flexible work arrangements, including reduced work hours and adaptable schedules, significantly enhance employee performance, job happiness and organisational commitment (Andeyo et al., 2024; Eshak, 2021). Employees who perceive organisational support are more inclined to exhibit engagement and perform at higher levels (Chen et al., 2019; Darmawan & Alawiyah, 2024; Yamin & Pusparini, 2022).

Extensive research in Asia, particularly in Indonesia and India, demonstrates the significant impact of flexible work arrangements and perceived organisational support on employee engagement and productivity (Darmawan & Alawiyah, 2024; Pramaditya & Pusparini, 2022; Pradipta & Martdianty, 2023; Rahmawati & Pusparini, 2023; Shaheen & Krishnankutty, 2018; Marumpe et al., 2023; Yamin & Pusparini, 2022). Research on Indonesian firms and digital startups indicates that FWAs enhance employee engagement, subsequently resulting in improved job performance (Darmawan & Alawiyah, 2024; Rahmawati & Pusparini, 2023; Yamin & Pusparini, 2022). Supervisor support is a significant component influencing employees' perceptions and benefits derived from flexible work arrangements (Sekhar & Patwardhan, 2021; Pradipta & Martdianty, 2023). In India, POS has been shown to enhance the engagement of flexible workers in their tasks and improve their performance in activities beyond their standard responsibilities. Psychological capital also contributes to these relationships (Shaheen & Krishnankutty, 2018). Research conducted in Europe, particularly in Serbia, indicates that employee commitment fully or predominantly mediates the relationship between flexible work arrangements and organizational performance, as well as innovative work behaviour (Gašić et al., 2024; Kelly et al., 2020).

African research on this subject is limited; nonetheless, it acknowledges the increasing utilisation of FWAs to address work-life balance and performance challenges (Stella & Iheriohanma, 2020). Research from Ghana and Egypt indicates that academic personnel perform more effectively when they get an improved work-life balance through flexible work arrangements (Eshun & Segbenya, 2024; Eshak, 2021). Reviews indicate that flexible work arrangements (FWAs) can enhance the performance of individuals and organisations; nevertheless, they also highlight the necessity for further empirical research on the effects of perceived organisational support and the differences between employee-driven and employer-driven flexibility (Stella & Iheriohanma, 2020). However, the literature suggests that we need more diverse research studies and context-specific studies, especially in non-Western academic settings (Hariyanto et al., 2024; Ismail & Michael, 2023).

In Zimbabwean universities, various flexible work arrangements, such as remote work, were adopted to ensure the continuity of lectures via online platforms. However, activities like as student enrollment and other administrative duties were not given priority. The study conducted by Muchowe, et al., (2021) revealed that the implementation of flexible work arrangements in Zimbabwe's higher and tertiary institutions had a beneficial impact on employee performance amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Another study conducted in Zimbabwe by Zvavahera and Chirima (2023) found that higher education institutions in the country did not offer the required resources and support for male and female academics to effectively

work from home. The survey additionally determined that FWAs were favored and valued by academics of both genders.

Despite the ongoing discussions about FWAs and efforts by organizations to develop innovative approaches to workplace management, the existing literature exhibits a notable deficiency of direct empirical research from Zimbabwean universities on this subject. Conducting such study is crucial due to the diversity among university personnel and the many university cultures, which are characterized by extended working hours, increased workload, and a growth in job insecurity through the use of fixed-term contracts and casual employment (Vranic, 2013). The study seeks to contribute to the current body of knowledge on flexible work arrangements implemented at universities during the COVID-19 pandemic, and explore how universities might utilize FWAs as a strategy to enhance employee performance in the aftermath of the epidemic. This study seeks to address the lack of empirical research on the collaboration of the three variables in the Zimbabwean setting. The study aims to establish the relationship between flexible work arrangements and employee performance, as well as investigate the role of perceived organizational support (POS) in mediating this link.

In order to address the research objectives mentioned earlier, this research is organized as follows: the first section provides an introduction, and the second section presents a literature review on the concepts of FWAs, employee performance, and empirical studies examining the relationship between these variables. The third section outlines the research methodology, including the approach, design, and data gathering methods to be employed. The fourth component pertains to the analysis of data, while the last section addresses the primary results, consequences, and limits of the study.

Research objectives

1. To determine the relationship between flexible working arrangements and the level of employee performance at the university.
2. To establish the relationship between flexible work arrangements and perceived organizational support at the university.
3. To identify the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational performance at the university.
4. To determine the mediating role of perceived organizational support in the relationship between flexible work arrangements and employee performance at the university.

Hypotheses

H1: A significant relationship exists between flexible working arrangements and employee performance.

H2: A significant relationship exists between flexible work arrangements and perceived organizational support.

H3: A significant relationship exists between perceived organizational support and employee performance.

H4: Perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between flexible work arrangements and employee performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section explores the theoretical framework and literature related to the study.

Theoretical framework

The theory underlying this study is the social exchange theory, which posits that employees exhibit more favourable sentiments towards their organisation when they see it as concerned for their well-being and

committed to their welfare (Lee et al., 2023). This theory posits that employees who perceive support from their organisation are more likely to exhibit positive behaviours and enhance their performance (Calyton, 2015; Rhodes et al., 2002). This exchange occurs as employees perceive a responsibility to assist the organisation in achieving its objectives when they recognise that their contributions are esteemed and their well-being is prioritised (K'osuri et al., 2020). For example, when organisations provide flexible work arrangements, employees see these policies as indications that the company prioritises their needs and appreciates their contributions. This perspective fosters a reciprocal commitment, aligning employees' own aspirations with the organization's objectives and values (Ma, 2018). When employees perceive organisational assistance as choice rather than obligatory, they feel compelled to exert greater effort and perform better (Aktar et al., 2017; Eisenberger et al., 1997). Employees receiving organisational assistance via flexible arrangements are more inclined to demonstrate commitment and exert greater effort to assist the business in achieving its objectives (Hidayah et al., 2021; Takeuchi et al., 2009).

Flexible work arrangements

Many firms are currently promoting flexible work arrangements as part of their efforts to help employees combine their work and family duties while still performing well. Flexible work arrangements, as defined refer to benefits provided by employers that allow employees to have a certain degree of autonomy in determining their work schedule and location outside of the regular work hours (Kerroumia, & Saadaoui, 2021). FWAs cover a range of strategies, including as telecommuting, remote working, flexible scheduling, customized work hours, job sharing, condensed work weeks, flexible vacation, and part-time work (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2019). These choices enable employees to effectively manage their work by allowing them to work later in the day, adjust their end times, or work remotely or telecommute without any negative impact on their performance.

Flexible work arrangements enhance productivity, organizational performance, job satisfaction, and employee retention (Clancy, 2020). Advocates have hailed FWAs as a universal remedy for various work-related problems, such as time fatigue (Galinsky et al., 2011), the balance challenge of juggling responsibilities for both children and elderly parents, work-life balance (Dizaho et al., 2017), and productivity (Morikawa, 2020). Employees favor this method due to its responsiveness to their evolving personal demands and situations (Goudswaard et al., 2013; Inayat & Khan, 2021). A study conducted by Hilbrecht [29] demonstrated that FWAs have an adverse effect on work-life balance. This is due to employees having to juggle childcare responsibilities and online work activities simultaneously, resulting in a reduction of their leisure time and therefore impacting their overall well-being.

Employee performance

The employees' performance is crucial for the attainment of an organization's objectives. Rahman & Kistyanto (2019) defined performance as the successful accomplishment of work tasks, encompassing both the quality and quantity of work, in accordance with the predetermined targets set by the firm. Iqbal et al. (2015) stated that organizational performance include the fulfillment of assigned responsibilities, adherence to deadlines, employee proficiency, and the ability to operate effectively and efficiently. The elements of organizational performance include task performance, which encompasses the execution of assigned tasks (Conway, 1999), adaptive performance or counterproductive behavior (Hesketh & Neal, 1999), and contextual performance (Bateman & Organ, 1983). According to Faiza and Nazir (2015), organizational performance can be defined as the behavioral responses that demonstrate the knowledge and skills acquired via training, including psychological and mental abilities. Enhancing the performance of each individual employee has the potential to enhance the overall performance of the organization.

Perceived organisational support.

POS refers to the perception of employees regarding the degree to which the organization appreciates their contributions. Eisenberger et al. (1986) found that individuals made valuable contributions and shown

concern for the well-being of others. With POS, employees make deductions about the level of support provided by the organization based on its policies, procedures, and treatment. They then respond to this support by showing enhanced loyalty and performance. (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Flexible work arrangements are available to all employees, and people actively pursue FWAs to accommodate their lifestyle requirements. Organizations demonstrate their commitment to becoming a workplace that prioritizes the well-being of its employees by offering FWAs as a human resources practice. An organization must demonstrate more regard and admiration for its employees while attending to their physical and mental well-being. Hence, when employees think that their business is providing them with assistance, they are less inclined to have the desire to leave their organization but are more inclined to have the goal to enhance their productivity. The relationship between employees and employers can be seen as an exchange of employee effort, performance, and loyalty in return for flexible work arrangements, such as leave and tangible resources.

Flexible working arrangements and employee performance

Numerous studies have demonstrated that flexible work arrangements enhance employee effectiveness. A meta-analysis revealed a correlation of $r = 0.596$, indicating a moderate to large effect size (Civilidag et al., 2024). Research in the banking sector of Kenya and Rivers State demonstrated that granting employees increased autonomy at work resulted in enhanced performance (Mekuri-Ndimele, 2020). Another study indicated that healthcare professionals with flexible schedules and supportive supervision perform significantly better in their roles (Dousin et al., 2019). Recent research indicate that flexible work arrangements enhance organizational performance by improving time management, reducing stress levels, and facilitating the balance between professional and personal life (Suparman, 2024).

Concurrently, research conducted by Tharuhiska (2022) in the Sri Lankan Service sector revealed that flexible work arrangements such as adaptable leave systems, career development opportunities, and the ability to share and schedule work flexibly are common practices that significantly enhance employee productivity. In the Malaysian setting, Suhaimi and Seman (2019) found that leave policy programs were somewhat correlated with organizational performance. Multiple empirical studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between flexible work arrangements and organizational performance (Austin-Egole et al., 2020; Akpa, et al., 2020; Hashim, Muli, Nayanathara & Karunarathne, 2021; Ullah & Khan, 2017). Nevertheless, there is not a unanimous consensus among studies regarding the favorable effects of remote work. For instance, Monteiro et al. (2019) discovered a negative link between distant work and productivity. This study therefore hypothesized that:

H1: A significant relationship exists between flexible working arrangements and employee performance.

Perceived organizational support and employee performance

Research shows that POS correlates with improved employee performance across various industries and metrics. A conducted at a private university in Indonesia found that perceived organizational support, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior had a favorable and significant impact on employee performance (Ridwan e al., 2020). Meta-analytic findings provide the strongest evidence, with over 70 studies linking POS to enhanced employee performance and other positive organizational outcomes (Yildiz et al., 2017; Rhoades et al., 2002). While this link is statistically significant and reliable, the effect size is often moderate (Giorgi et al., 2016). The correlation between POS and performance has been confirmed in several domains, including healthcare with nurses (Gillet et al., 2013), banking with retail sales and frontline staff (Shaheen et al., 2016), manufacturing across nations (Sharma et al., 2020), higher education (Nazir et al., 2017), and hospitality (Biswakarma, 2017). Additional research has demonstrated that organizational support has a favorable impact on enhancing employees' performance (Farooqi et al., 2019; Ikon & Ogochukwu, 2021). Employees with high POS exhibit reduced absenteeism, enhanced job satisfaction, and contribute positively to organisational performance (Sun, 2019).

Evidence from multiple cultures supports the universality of this connection. Research in the United States (Armeli et al., 1998), Pakistan and Saudi Arabia (Sabir et al., 2021), India (Nazir et al., 2017), and Thailand (Na-nan et al., 2019) shows a positive correlation between POS and performance, indicating that this influence is not limited to a single culture. Recent studies demonstrate that POS has significant positive effects on various performance dimensions, with effect sizes ranging from moderate to strong depending on the specific performance metric and mediating variables (Abdullahi et al., 2024; Emmanuela et al., 2023). The consistency of these outcomes across contexts provides robust evidence that organizational support can enhance organizational performance. In light of the above the study formulated this hypothesis,

H2: A significant relationship exists between POS and organizational performance.

Flexible work arrangements and perceived organizational support

Maxwell et al. (2007) argue that implementing flexible working arrangements requires support from the company, as such policies need organizational backing. A study by Yamin and Pusparini (2022) found that flexible work arrangements and perceived organizational support positively and significantly affect employee engagement and job performance. Organizations can show their commitment to employees through flexible work arrangements in several ways. These include providing necessary tools for remote work, allocating resources for training and support, assisting in home office setups, and allowing flexible working hours to balance professional and familial obligations (Deschenes, 2023). Flexible work arrangements and flextime can reduce work-family conflict and enhance organizational support (Andrade et al., 2022; Stinglhamber et al., 2020).

Research indicates that employees who perceive their organization as offering flexible work options for their well-being have more favourable sentiments towards the company than those who see such policies as profit-driven (Weideman et al., 2020). Flexible work arrangements show that organizations value their employees' contributions and prioritize their well-being, enhancing job satisfaction and commitment (Hidayah et al., 2021). Flexible employment arrangements serve as an "insurance policy," enhancing their effectiveness in conveying signals. Employees may feel more secure with the opportunity for flexibility (Yucel et al., 2023). The perceived availability of social assistance can significantly impact mental health more than the actual receipt of aid.

Flexible work schedules function as HR policies that show the organization's commitment to work-life balance and professional development, especially for employees with familial responsibilities (Wanger, 2024). By transmitting these signals, organizations demonstrate their readiness to meet employee needs and foster supportive work environments, thereby increasing organizational commitment (Metselaar et al., 2022). Ensuring the existence of strong perceived organizational support by implementing flexible working arrangements will ensure optimal organizational performance. Based on the above discussion the study hypothesized that:

H3: A significant relationship exists between flexible work arrangements and POS.

Mediation of perceived organizational support on FWA and employee performance

Numerous research indicate that perceived organisational support significantly influences the relationship between flexible working arrangements and job performance. Perceived organisational support facilitates the utilisation of FWAs therefore enhancing employee commitment and performance (Pramaditya & Pusparini, 2022). Perceived organisational support enhances the beneficial impacts of FWAs on job performance by increasing employee engagement, organisational commitment, and work-life balance (Yamin & Pusparini, 2022; Pramaditya & Pusparini, 2022; Rahmawati & Pusparini, 2023; Darmawan & Alawiyah, 2024). Specifically, POS can directly enhance employees' propensity to select flexible work options and indirectly improve performance by reinforcing their affiliation with the firm (Pramaditya &

Pusparini, 2022). Perceive organisational support fosters a sense of belonging and commitment, hence amplifying the positive effects of FWAs on performance (Chen et al., 2019; Gašić et al., 2024).

Research indicates that organisational support is expressed in multiple forms within flexible work contexts. Supervisor support significantly influences employees' attitudes regarding the efficacy of flexible working arrangements. Employers exhibit this support by promoting, approving, and executing flexible remote work policies (Al-Madadha et al., 2022; Mungania et al., 2016). Moreover, perceived organisational support impacts the ease with which employees utilise flexible arrangements, hence affecting their behavioural intentions and the effectiveness of implementation (Al-Madadha et al., 2022; Eisenberger et al., 2020). This assistance demonstrates organisations' dedication to appreciating employees' productivity and performance while prioritising their health and well-being, thereby establishing a thorough foundation for comprehending the mediation process (Al-Madadha et al. 2022; Eisenberger et al., 2020). Flexible working arrangements improve job performance through perceived organisational support, with employee involvement as a key intermediary. The study hypothesized that:

H4: Perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between flexible work arrangements and employee performance.

Conceptual framework

The following conceptual framework shows the relationship between the study variables.

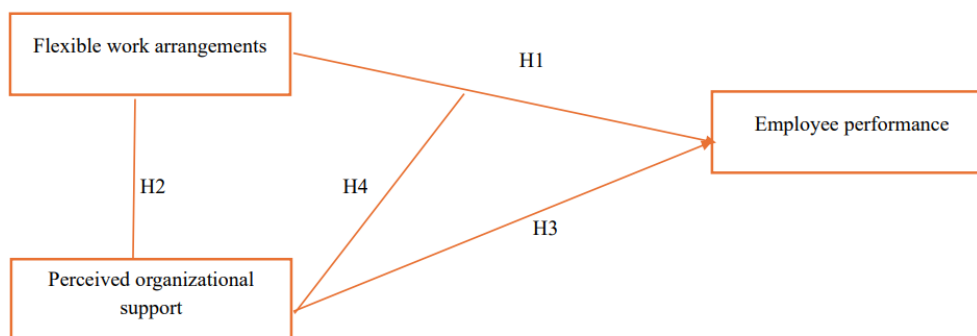


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of variables

Figure 1 above illustrates the conceptual framework of the research. The independent variable of the research was flexible work arrangement, while the dependent variable was organizational performance. The mediating variable as depicted by the conceptual framework is perceived organizational support. Most traditions depict the relationship between flexible work arrangements and organizational performance. However, this conceptual framework challenges these research traditions and adds perceived organizational support as a mediating variable to this relationship.

METHODS

The present study utilized the positivist research paradigm by taking into account the nature of the research problem. The purpose of the research was to evaluate a series of hypotheses, with the objective of both validating and expanding upon the existing theory. The study utilized a correlational research methodology to establish the relationship between flexible work arrangements and employee performance in a selected university in Zimbabwe. The study population was 250 Zimbabwean university employees. The study used stratified sampling and academics and administrative professionals established the strata. Simple random sampling method was used to select the individual participants. The sample size of 137 respondents was determined using the Raosoft online sample size calculator.

Research instruments

Data was collected using self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire included measurement scale for perceived organizational support which was developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986) and Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002). This tool consists of eight items, and its reliability was a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.651. The 11-item Flexible Work Options Questionnaire (FWOQ) by Albion (2004) was used to assess the flexible working arrangements. The 11-item employee performance scale used was adapted from Farooq (2016). This scale assessed task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior characteristics. All scale items were evaluated using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analysed using SPSS version 30. Regression analysis was employed with inferential statistics used to test hypothesis, and mediation analysis was done via Andrew F. Hayes test. The researchers adhered to ethical principles such as obtaining informed consent from participants and ensuring confidentiality of their information during collection and processing.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section highlights the findings and discussions of the study.

Sample demographics

Table 1: Sample demographics

	Frequency (%)
Gender	
Female	55
Male	45
Marital status	
Single	29.5
Married	56.1
Widowed	9.8
Separated	4.5
Age (years)	
25-35	59.1
36-45	20.5
46-55	15.2
56 and above	5.3
Educational level	
Diploma	9.8
Undergrad	62.1
Master's Degree	28.0
Experience	
0-10 years	55.3
11-20 years	29.5
21+ years	15.2
Designation	
Non-Managerial Staff	65.9
Managerial Staff	35.1

Table 1 above shows the sample demographics. The majority of the respondents are male (55%), while the females are also represented in the study (45%). The sample demographics were dominated by married (56.1%) people, and people aged between 25 and 35 (59.1%). In addition, most of the respondents have an undergraduate educational qualification (62.1%), and have 0-10 years' experience (55.3%). The majority of the respondents are non-managerial staff (65.9%).

Reliability analysis

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha Scores

	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Flexible work arrangements	.983	.985	11
Perceived organizational support	.750	.755	8
Organizational performance	.782	.784	11

Table 2 above shows reliability analysis results based on Cronbach alpha's coefficient. All scales were acceptable. Perceived organizational support and organizational performance scored above 0.7 which is moderate but acceptable reliability. Flexible work arrangements had excellent reliability (0.983). Hence, all scales were retained for the main research.

Sample adequacy and factor analysis

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett Tests

	KMO Test	Bartlett's Test
Flexible work arrangements	.821	.000
Perceived organizational support	.804	.000
Employee performance	.813	.000

Table 3 above demonstrates the results from KMO and Bartlett's tests. The KMO scores are all above 0.8 for the three scales signifying a good sample adequacy. The Bartlett test p-values are all below 0.05 signifying good factor analysis. All the scales were thus used in the main research.

Regression analysis

Table 4: Regression analysis results

Hypothesis	R ²	p-value	Interpretation
H1: Flexible work arrangements x employee performance	0.54	0.00	Supported
H2: Flexible work arrangements x perceived organizational support	0.79	0.00	Supported
H3: Perceived organizational support x organizational performance	0.67	0.00	Supported

H1 tested the assumption that a relationship exists between flexible work arrangements and organizational performance. The p-value is below 0.05 signifying that a positive and significant relationship exists between the two variables. Furthermore, the R² is 0.54, meaning that flexible work arrangements account for 54% of employee performance. This is consistent to Brougham (2020) who demonstrates that organizations offering flexible work arrangements had superior employee performance. H2 tested the assumption that relationship exists between flexible work arrangements and organizational support. The p-value is below 0.05 signifying that the hypothesis is supported. In addition, the R² is 0.79 meaning that there is a strong positive relationship. This aligns to observations by Deschenes (2022) that flexible work arrangements initiatives are successful where there is perceived organizational support. H3 tested the assumption that a relationship

exists between perceived organizational support and employee performance. The results ($p < 0.05$; $R^2 = 0.67$) demonstrate that the hypothesis is substantiated. This is consistent with Ridwan et al. (2020) who shows that employee performance is dependent on the level of support given to the employees.

Mediation analysis

Table 5: Mediation results

Path	Coefficient (β)	p-value
a (FWA \rightarrow EP)	0.54	0.000
b (POS \rightarrow EP)	0.67	0.000
c (POS \rightarrow FWA)	0.79	0.000
a \times b (indirect effect)	0.85	Bootstrapped CI [0.56, 0.70]

Notes: FWA=flexible work arrangements, POS=perceived organizational support, EP= employee performance

Table 5 above illustrate the results from mediation analysis through Andrew F. Hayes test. The results demonstrate that (Indirect effect = 0.85; $p < 0.05$) that perceived organizational support significantly mediates the relationship between flexible work arrangements and employee performance. Therefore, H4 is substantiated. This finding is reflected by observations by Chen et al. (2019) that flexible work arrangements are effective in enhancing employee performance where the employer provides its employees with support.

CONCLUSION

The research concludes that organizational support is essential for the implementation of flexible work arrangements. In addition, perceived organizational support is also vital for employee performance in universities. However, the effect is significant where the university offers both flexible work arrangements and perceived organizational support. For universities to realize their goals they need to provide employees with essential resources and policies that make flexible work arrangements easy to implement.

Limitations and recommendations

Flexible work arrangements are essential for employee performance, and institutions are recommended to implement these initiatives to boost performance. Universities can come up with policies such as teleworking, compressed work weeks and remote working to promote flexible work arrangements. Institutions are also recommended to offer support for those on flexible work arrangements in order to maximize employee performance. The study was limited to a private university in Zimbabwe. Further studies on a similar problem can be conducted with state universities which have a unique context. The research was limited to quantitative methodology, a follow up qualitative research can be useful in generating deeper insights on flexible work arrangements, perceived organizational support and employee performance.

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