

# Conceptualizing Employee Empowerment through Flexible Working

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## Abstract

This paper analysis and reports the empowerment through flexible working options in organizations. Paper examines the relationship between flexible working schedules and empowerment among employees, looks at how flexible working are source of empowerment. Empowering employees to participate in organizational decision making and their day to day activities can improve organizations performance, quality and quantity of work, team working, Job satisfaction and reduce turnover. Flexible working improves the life and well-being of employees as Flexible working provides opportunity to make their working schedules. Any form of empowerment results in taking on workers more responsibilities and flexible working is one of the intentions of empowerment and encouragements. In many organizations managers and owners are trying to answer a question how to empower the employees. Flexible working is the most common and powerful tool through which managers can empower the employees within organizations. This paper concludes how different flexible working options might have effect on employee empowerment. Access to flexible working is the key to empowerment, self-confident and dignity of the employees.

**Keywords:** Flexible Working, Empowerment, Employees

## 1. Introduction of concepts: Empowerment and Flexible working

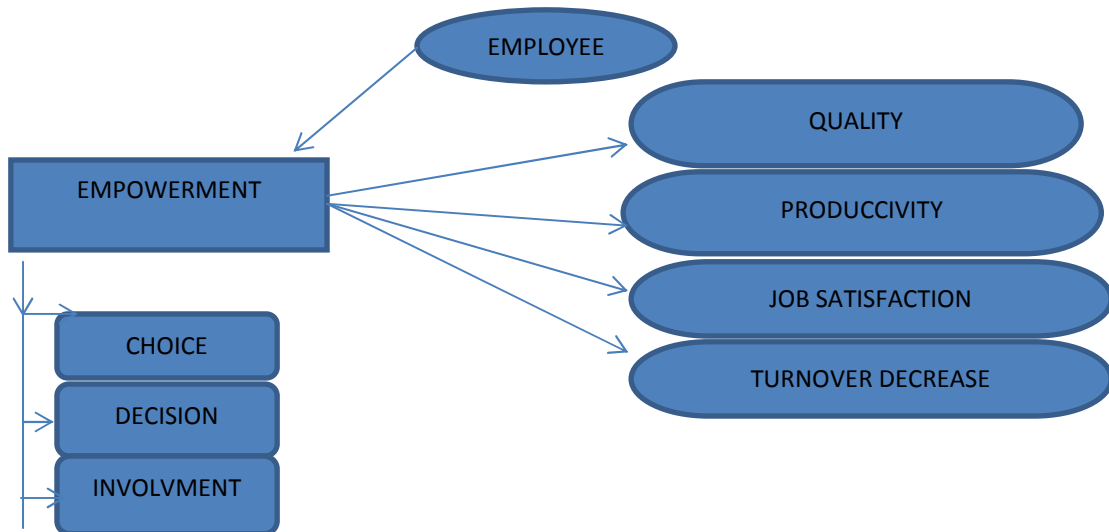
Organizations have undertaken various initiatives to acquire business tolls to control production costs, reduce turnover, increase job satisfaction and improve productivity and quality of work. These goals can be achieved through employee empowerment and the implementation of flexible working options. Empowerment through Flexible working will not only improve productivity and reduce costs but also create organizations goodwill and develops sense of ownership among employees.

The embrace of technology has provided many benefits to organizations and provide base for smart working, attraction, retention and motivating of organizations most important resource from strategic and from economic point of view human resource. It is need for organizations to recruit and retain top talent human resource for competitive advantage. Organizations which have best human resources practices are aware of the key issues that improve job satisfaction among employees. Family, social life, salary, environment, empowerment and flexible working are top of mind of issues of employees. Many employees are trying to balance between work and personal life, have flexibility to make their decisions themselves. These issues determine whether your employees will own organization, stay and perform for your organization.

The concept of empowerment is become central time since late 1960 in political platforms and in different movements (Gorz, 1980). According to Jill M( 1992), empowerment is a process by which oppressed persons gain some control over their lives, which allow people increased involvement in matters which affect them directly or indirectly. So in the empowerment people govern themselves more effectively than managed by others. Empowerment process makes right use of the power for themselves but not power over others. Empowerment is also seen as process to break the boundaries between the public and private domains and comes from personal to social domain (Bookman & Morgan, 1988).

Employ empowerment basically is a choice for employees to make their decisions themselves. This is also considered as a way for employee's involvement in decision making process, which results in improved quality, productivity, satisfaction and reduced turnover.

Figure 1. Empowerment

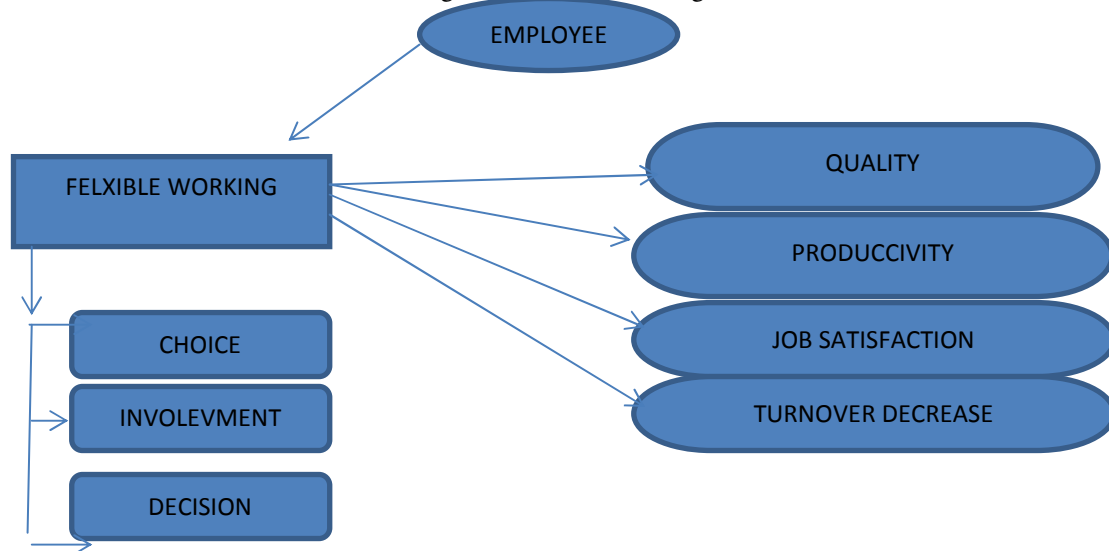


Empowerment can be momentarily or transformative, when it is permanent then it is transformative and when it is temporary then it is momentarily. It is distribution of social and authority's power. It provides subordinates experience of their own empowerment. The ideology of empowerment is not without pitfalls.

Flexible in working includes varieties of practices including different start and finish times, teleworking, shift working part time working, job sharing, flexible time and different flexible contracts. Flexible working is mostly invested from management perspectives a practice which is appropriate to offer the employees to make their working decisions themselves, having control on working schedules and improves the performance of both employees and organization. It is also used to create employers good will, social and ethical responsibilities. There is long history of employees have control over their work and decision making authority.

Flexible working either formal or informal is not only giving employees authority to have control over working and decision making but also an alternative method for management control over the employees. It is process for employ involvement in scheduling working and choice to make their own decision, which results in many benefits for organization.

Figure 2. Flexible working



Flexible working is not only considered as base for work life balance but base for employee empowerment (Hogarth et al, 2001). Flexible working option allow employees to balance between work and personal life, make their own decisions for scheduling time , place and amount of work to be done. Flexible workings are considered an important component of work- life balance and ideal family friendly policy. Flexible workings are has positive effect on attitude and job satisfaction (Lietchy & Anderson 2007).

## 2. Flexible working as Employee Empowerment

The management theories X and Y always guide us in human motivation. Instead of considering employees as worker who avoids work and responsibilities let us have a positive thinking that individuals like work and responsibilities if they are provided employee friendly and conducive working environments. Employee friendly environment includes both friendly at workplace means having decision making, flexibility, participation and employee family friendly means managing family matters without any conflict between work and family. The Polices those are friendly for both paid and unpaid work (Chun & Sheena, 2006).

Empowerment means to provide opportunity to make decisions about working and non-working issues, avail their opportunities, improve the well-being of working and non-working life. Make your own decision rather follow the decisions made by others about day to day activities. Empowerment increases quality of life for both men and women. Empowerment will make employees more confident and capable for making their decisions themselves, which further will result in efficiency and effective ness of both employees and organizations. Through empowerment employees take ownership in work and organization. Toyota company is a best example of empowerment and flexible working, this company is consistently is outperforming its competitors. Empowerment is also a competitive advantage. Empowerment is not an easy as it is considered. Decisions made by employees for themselves are not always positive for management. Proper planning employee empowerment can reduce the negative outcomes of the empowerment. Empowerment success depends on the way in which empowerment has been given to employees.

There are many ways for employees empowerment in their work but giving them flexibility working option is a best choice, simplest and a most power full tacit. Idea is very simple flexible working gives them sense of personal control and ownership, care and responsibility, which turns into motivation. Result will be higher productivity, creativity, performance, commitment and low turnover. Empowerment and flexible workings make employee involvement, improve employee decisions making and provide employee choice. This results in many benefits for both employee and employer including satisfaction, productivity and quality of work.

Figure 3. Empowerment and Flexible workings

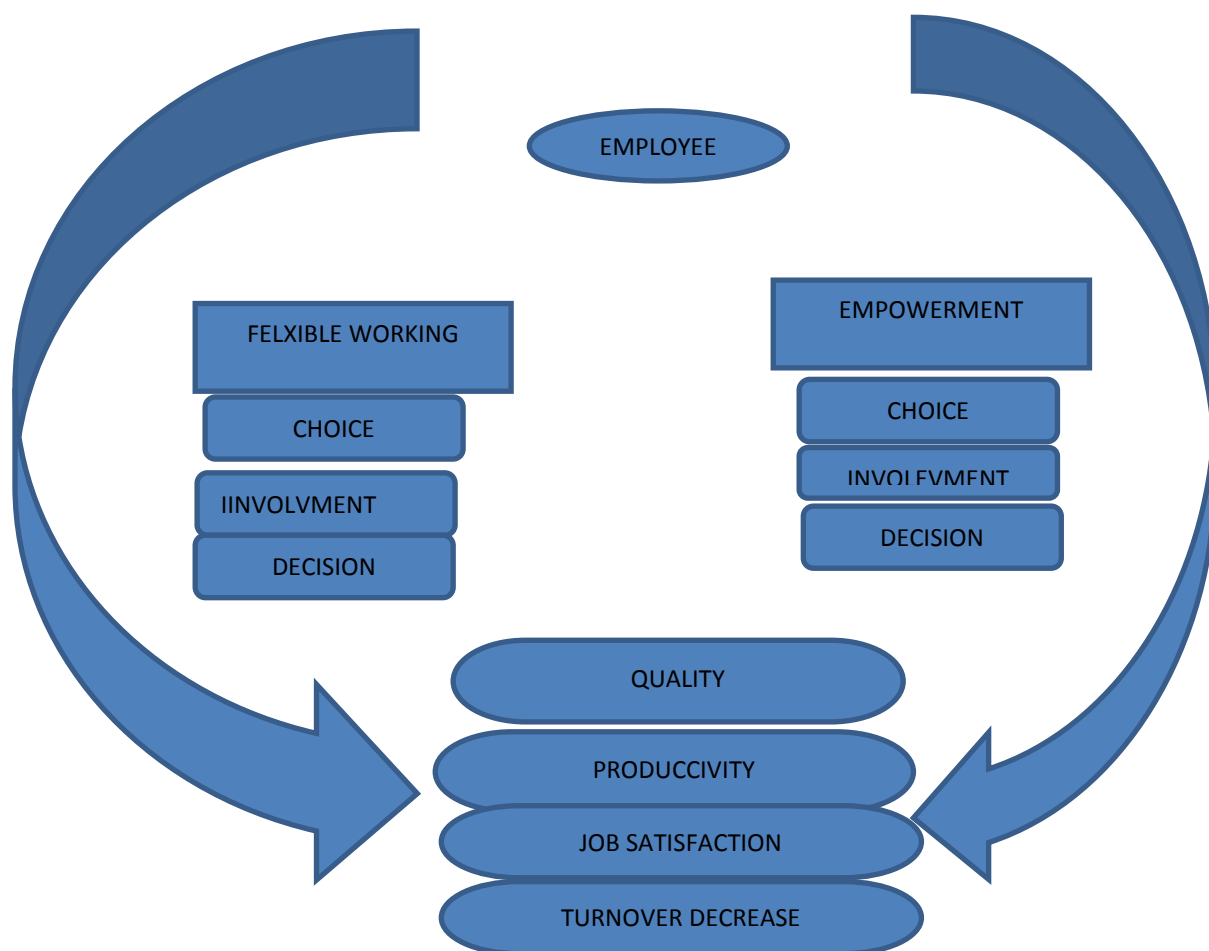


Figure 1. Architecture of WOZIP

Many managers consider empowerment through giving them flexible working options. Managers carefully adopt such flexible working options which are feasible for organization to adopt. A careful planned and implemented policy contributes towards planned goals. One reality of modern organizations is diversity, where employees come from different background having different educational levels and different economic status. People with different backgrounds have different meaning to empowerment. Flexible working minimizes those risks as it settles limits within flexibility.

Organizations consider issues of concern for employees, which effect on their participation and quality of life and should develop empowerments in related to issues of concern. Workplace rigid rules, child and elders care, social life and personal life, stress and health, career growth and competition are some major issues of concern for employee's participation in economic life and enjoying the quality of life. Employees need empowerments to handle all these issues and having decisions making authorizes related to that. Employees need empowerments to reduce conflict between paid and unpaid work. Decisions making in thesis areas gives them sense of empowerment.

Employees availing flexible working consider more empowered then those who do not have flexible working options, even they feel happier. The rationale behind is that they make their decisions about working and scheduling themselves. Obviously when employees are working flexibly and are empowered then they will choose and do best of the best. Flexible working options address all concerns of employees at workplaces. Flexible working option reduces workplaces rigidity, provides them base to balance between paid and unpaid work reduces stress and increases employee participation, quality of life.

Flexible working has many objectives one of them is to empower the employees to make their own decisions about time and place. Its aim is employee participation in decision making process. Working flexibility gives employees a real sense of empowerment.

Research shows that when employees are confronted with undesired and stressful working options and decisions are imposed on them rather then made by them they delay choosing best options , making batter decisions and involvement in work decreases and they shift the responsibilities on others. This increases among them power frustration and inferiority of unpowered. Flexible working eliminates this frustration and provides them opportunity to make decisions and increase sense of power (Jyengar & Lepper, 2000).

In flexible working there is proper cooperation and understanding between employees with themselves and with managers. Employees proper understand organizational needs and their own. Where organizational needs are considered own needs and have preferences on personal needs. Organizations goals are more important that personal goals. There is proper communication system among employees and managers. These all suggest flexible workings are real empowerment in the interest of employees and employer within limits (chua & Sheena, 2006).

Flexible working increases creativity and innovation in all spheres of the life and particularly at workplaces. Innovative working patterns are adopted by employees to balance both paid and unpaid work. Overall a new creative environment is introduced by flexible working options. Many researches show that creativity is enhanced when employees or individuals has more autonomy and freedom which means empowerment. More flexibility will be more empowerment and result will be creativity and innovation. Further High task and physical environment has flexibility and autonomy as necessary condition for creative performance and job performance (Zhou, 1998, Greenberg, 1992).

When flexibility is given it means empowerment is given to make own decisions. The fact is that flexible working and empowerment is not perceived in same way by everyone. Flexible working and empowerment is a personal agency so may not be as motivating for everyone. Absence of flexible working has negative view about work and organization. Absence of empowerment has negative psychological impacts on individuals (Snibbe & Markus, 2005).

Working in organizations is not a bed of roses, sometimes organizations make very difficult decisions because of market demands and unexpected market and economic environment. In these market and economic conditions flexible working and empowerment even is more helpful as flexibility and empowerment has much to share and contribute for organizations. A research indicates that provided flexible working and empowerment has more positive effects than demanded flexibility or empowerment.

Flexible working either formal or informal is not only giving employees authority to have control over working and decision making but also an alternative method for management control over the employees. Empowerment is also a toll for an easy control over employees, as decisions will be made by employees themselves. Organizational and psychological researches suggest that flexible working motivates and empowers the employees. Empowerment of employees is related to empowerment of community or society. Similarly flexible workings make a flexible community and it benefits to society. There are many ways we can look into how flexible working empowers the employees and especially decision making. It also looks at perception of employees about empowerment and flexible working.

Only few organizations consider how these flexible working options and empowerment can improve day to day

life of average employees. Flexible workings provide the means for motivating and empower the employees. When management provide the comfort of flexible working like scheduling, time, place options then job satisfaction and organizational commitment increases dramatically. Flexible working and empowerment not only satisfy the employees immediate needs but also reduces frustration of power and decision making authority among the employees. These facilities have critical importance in life which sometimes managers fail to understand. The concept of empowerment has both individual and organizational aspects. Empowerment has different dimensions, including control of one's own work, autonomy on the job and variations in time and place. As this variety is examined some of the focus on individuals ability and desired to be empowered (Menon, 1995).

Powerless carries self-negation with himself or herself. Therefore empowerment has psychological implications like gaining the manhood and women hood. Empowerment of employees is related to empowerment of community or society. Researchers suggest that any form of empowerment results in taking on workers more responsibilities and flexible working is one of the intentions of empowerment and encouragements.

The ability through flexible working option to increase or decreases working hours, selecting the place and suitable time for work, alter their working schedules basically increases choice among employees and bargaining power, which results in empowerment of employees(Berg et al, 2004).

### **3. Benefits of Employee Empowerment through Flexible Working**

#### **3.1. Quality and Quantity of work**

Work quality is a basic element to evaluate the performance of an employee. Employee's acceptable quality of work meets certain expectations including complete work on time and error free, completion of work efficiently and following the organizational procedure while performing the work. There are different parameters to judge the quality of the work, within the parameters of time, quality and work it. It is fact that Employees contribute for the wellbeing of economy, society and organizations and they can make difference in the world. Organization's success is dependent on employee's performance and they play major role in this regard. Organizations which provide their employee's flexible working then employees feel freedom and empowered them try to provide high quality of work. Empowered through flexible working employees feel pride in working and takes responsibility of doing best work, as work is performed on the will of the employee. The result of this flexibility will be empowered employee and empowered employee will deliver high quality of work.

When employees are granted flexible working options they feel empowered to do work, which creates sense of responsibilities, sense of ownership and self-accountability. They consider work done as their won achievement and efficiency. Their will to work more increases the quantity of the work. They try to meet their goals which results in meeting organizational goals and deadlines. Sense of ownership and accountability makes them energetic and productive. Flexible working fuels an empowered employee.

In today's business environment every organization is trying to outperform its competitors and to gain maximum market share. There is direct correlation between employee productivity and organizations performance. Now there is question of how to improve the employee's productivity? Businesses in market believe in the philosophy of empowerment, that not only increases productivity but many other benefits. This philosophy is based on the idea that employees will have control on their work and will make their own decisions and their participation will increase.

#### **3.2. Teamwork:**

Flexible working creates mutual trust among employees, management and owners; they all care about each other's needs and especially organizational needs and demands. When employees are flexible to make their own working schedules then they are empowered and their self-confident will increase. They will more willing to share information with each other and with management. They will exchange with each other their preferences, innovative ideas and support each other to meet their and organizational goals. This will promote collaboration and teamwork. Team working and collaboration among employees will help organization it meet its demands, make working environment more pleasant .

#### **3.3. Reduced Costs and Increased profits**

Decreased costs are another benefit of empowerment through flexible working. When employees plan and schedule their work themselves on their convenience, they feel sense of ownership and accountability which results in increased productivity and decreases costs. Efficiency of operations increases due to increased quantity of the work. Employees become awakened about their inefficiencies which increase the organizational costs.

Flexible working more engages the employees in day to day activities. They share their innovative ideas for improvement of goods and services. Quality and quantity of the work increases profits of the organization. Empowered employee also increases customer services as sense of responsibilities and accountability. Employees have power to make their own decisions and they feel accountable for their decisions. They find solutions for customer complaints and provide exceptional customer services. This will result in happy and loyal customer who increases sale of organizations and profits. Organizations which empowers their employees their

sale increases and have 50% higher loyalty from their customers (Wagner & Harter, 2006).

#### 3.4. Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is general feeling towards job rather than a particular fact of job like salary or benefit. The high level benefit of empowering employees at workplaces through flexible working option is employee job satisfaction. Organizations with high level of satisfaction have flexible working arrangements and empowerment at work places. This is reaffirmed by Wagner and Harter 2006, employees with higher level of flexible working and less level of structure, hierarchies and management levels. Employees in environment where is high level of structures and hierarchies are unable to identify problems, deficiencies and unable to solve problems. They can easily solve such problems where is flexible working patterns and empowered employees. Increased responsibilities and empowerment increases job satisfaction level among employees. Employees Sense of control over working schedule makes working more meaning full for them and improves job satisfaction among them. Empirical evidences from different areas support to empowerment and job satisfaction level among employees ( Davis, Laschinger & Andrusyszyn, 2006, Sarmieno, laschinger & Iwasiw, 2004).

#### 3.5. Turnover

Turnover is rate at which employer gains or loses an employee. Simply how much employees stay within organization. Avoiding employee turnover is ongoing goal of management. Turnover decreases as increased level of satisfaction among employees due to empowerment and flexible working option. Flexible working increases loyalty for organization. This increases retention ratios among organizations. High level ratio of retention decreases recruitment and advertising costs. Dissatisfaction increases likelihood of turnover. Large amount of literature shows inverse relationship between job satisfaction and turnover. Job satisfaction effect on turnover is indirect and relationship is mediated by employee intentions, especially intention to leave the organization. Turnover intention and turnover rates are strongly and positively related.

### 4. Conclusion

This analysis shows that, there is positive relationship between flexible working arrangements and empowerment. Flexibility increases employee's autonomy, bargaining power, capability of making decisions and choice. In many organizations managers and owners are trying to answer a question how to empower the employees. Flexible working is the most common and powerful tool through which managers can empower the employees within organizations. Organizational and psychological researches suggest that flexible working motivates and empowers the employees. Flexibility of employees is related to empowerment of community, society and employees.

This research has reviewed and suggests managers that managers have to be care full in formulation and implementation of flexible working options. Proper communication and equal options providing is important. Flexible working either formal or informal is not only giving employees authority to have control over working and decision making but also an alternative method for management control over the employees. Researchers suggest that any form of empowerment results in taking on workers more responsibilities and flexible working is one of the intentions of empowerment and encouragements.

It appears that empowerment through flexible working is on rise in many organizations. Empowerment through flexible working is a complete process which cannot be achieved in short term, so it is at evolutionary stage. Initially organizations are moving to few flexible working options, which internalize the means of empowerment for employees.

Employee empowerment will not appear in organizations naturally but organizations have to eliminate depowering structures at managerial level, which have been built in organizations since its inception for employee control. Finally employee empowerment is a multidimensional concept and no any single step or structure can describe it. Flexible working option is one step towards employee empowerment. Access to flexible working is the key to empowerment, self-confident and dignity of the employees.

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