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Strategies for Successful Implementation of Flexible Workplace Policies in the Middle East

Vida Moradinasab
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Vida Moradinasab

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Review Committee

Dr. Daniel Smith, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Chad Sines, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Kenneth Gossett, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2020

Abstract

Strategies for Successful Implementation of Flexible Workplace Policies in the Middle

East

by

Vida Moradinasab

MS, Heriot-Watt University, 2016

BS, American University of Sharjah, 2014

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration: Project Management

Walden University

December 2020

Abstract

Flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies can increase employees' job satisfaction, health, and productivity; however, approximately 70% of the organizational leaders fail to implement their innovative strategies successfully. Grounded in the factor-oriented conceptual framework proposed by Pryor, Anderson, Toombs and Humphrey, the purpose of this single case study was to explore strategies 7 knowledge workers of financial and accounting services in the Middle East use to implement flexible work policies in their organizations successfully. Semi-structured interviews were conducted through phone and video conferencing, and documents were reviewed to verify data. Thematic analysis and data triangulation between interviews and documents resulted in the emergence of 7 common themes: employee control, procedures, convenience, effectiveness, work outcomes, psychological relief, and prospects. The key recommendation is for accounting and services leaders to increase the flexible work policies to promote job satisfaction, health, productivity, and improve their work outcomes for knowledge workers. Social implications include potentially increasing employee loyalty and commitment, reducing turnover and unemployment rates, increasing tax revenues to support social programs, reducing emissions, and lessening traffic problems.

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Dedication

I dedicate this research to the most loving, selfless and compassionate woman I know, my mother. I would not be the person I am today if it was not for her.

Acknowledgments

My chair and advisor, Dr. Smith, thank you for your continuous support. My committee, Dr. Sines and Dr. Gossett, thank you for your constructive recommendations. Special thanks to my parents for continuous encouragement and support.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

For many working individuals, integrating work and family responsibilities are challenging (Fuller & Hirsh, 2019). Most organizational leaders, today, try to help their employees by providing some flexibility in their work that would help them meet and balance conflicting work and family responsibilities (Baeza, Gonzalez, & Wang, 2018). A recent review of the literature indicated that flexibility policies are not very well understood in organizations (Azar, Khan, & Eerde, 2018). Flexible work policies, offered by leaders of organizations to provide employees better work-life balance and improved performance, enable employees to work from home and outside regular office hours (Groen, van Triest, Coers, & Wtenweerde, 2018). According to Vasconcelos, Furtado, and Pinheiro (2015), professionals such as managers, lawyers, and psychologists need to work together to develop effective work flexibility policies.

However, as Hourani (2017) stated, strategy formulation for implementing work flexibility is often complicated, but doing so without an effective plan can be even more difficult. In this section, I will discuss the background of the problem, the purpose statement, nature of the study, conceptual framework, and significance of this study. Additionally, I will design the problem statement, the research question, and the interview questions,

Background of the Problem

For many people, the two main life domains are family and work (Mukanzi & Senaji, 2017); harmonizing the responsibilities of work and family is an essential part of every employee's life. However, most employees today face burdens and stresses from

various domains that require their time and energy (Mukanzi & Senaji, 2017). As a result, the majority of employees need to manage work and family responsibilities simultaneously (Mercado & Dilchert, 2017). The presence of dual-earning families and the increasing existence of women in the workforce and men as caregivers imply that both women and men endure work-life conflicts (Dhaini, Denhaerynck, Bechnick, Schwendimann, Schubert, Geest, & Simon, 2018; Trzebiatowski & Triana, 2018).

The conflict between work and family responsibilities impacts individuals negatively. For example, research shows that employee's depression and hypertension rates have increased recently (Michel, Kotrba, Mitchelson, Clark, & Baltes, 2011). Additionally, this conflict has been harming organizations as absenteeism and turnover rates due to family-work conflicts increased significantly in the last decade (Morelock, McNamara, & James, 2017). Hence, work-life balance policies, such as flexible work schedule and flexible workplaces policies may help both employees and employers address conflicts between work and other domains of life (Wiß, 2017). Successful implementation strategies of flexible work policies will be the focus of this research.

Problem Statement

The domains of work and family have both changed considerably and have become more obscure during the last three decades (Veld, Heijden, & Semeijn, 2016), impacting employee productivity and turnover intentions (Gordon, McMullin, & Adam, 2015). Leaders of organizations have begun to implement flexible work policies to reduce turnover intentions and retain talented employees (Azar, Khan, & Eerde, 2018). However, Hourani (2017) reported that a significant number of leaders of organizations

fail to implement about 70% of their new strategies. The general business problem is that some business leaders lack strategies for successful implementation of flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies. The specific business problem is that some business leaders in the Middle East lack strategies for successful implementation of flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study is to identify and explore the strategies that leaders in the accounting and financial services industry can use to successfully implement flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies in the Middle East. Flexibility policies in the workplace have advantages for both employees and employers (Galea, Houkes, & Rijk, 2014). Employees can benefit from reduced stress level and a better work-life balance (Gordon, McMullin, & Adam, 2015), which enables them to invest more time in serving communities. Employers can benefit from lower turnover rates, as well as inclusion of workers with disabilities who may more easily work from home, which in turn can reduce unemployment rates (Wittmer & Lin, 2017).

Nature of the Study

There are three primary research methodologies: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed. In qualitative research, open-ended questions are used to explore the research problem from the participants' perspectives through their experiences and analyses (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016). In quantitative studies, close-ended questions are used to test a null and alternative hypothesis about variables' relationships or groups'

differences. Using the mixed methods approach, a problem or phenomenon is examined and explored from both the quantitative and qualitative perspectives (Astin & Long, 2014). I will not be testing any hypotheses. I will be identifying and exploring strategies that business leaders use for successful implementation of flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies. Therefore, a qualitative approach is the best method to address my research question.

There are three primary qualitative research designs: narrative, ethnography, and case study. A narrative design enables explaining the problem through particular personal experiences and interpretations of people involved in the phenomenon. The narrative design is not suitable for this research because personal experiences and understandings of a problem do not help in understanding business aspects of a problem. Ethnography involves studying groups' cultures (Saunders et al., 2016) and will not be used independently in this study because culture is not the focus of this study. A case study is an in-depth analysis of the issue in a real-life setting (Yin, 2018). I will use a case study approach for my research because it enables me to analyze the business aspects of remote work in-depth and in real life.

The case study has two main approaches, which are the single case study and multiple case study. In the single case study approach, the researcher focuses on one particular case to explore different aspects of a problem (Yin, 2018). A single case study allows for more depth of analysis into specific case. A multiple case study uses various cases to collect and analyze data across various situations to understand the differences and similarities among cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008). I see depth of understanding over a

comparison of similarities and differences. Thus, I will be using a single case study to enable me to gain a deeper understanding of the strategies for successful implementation of flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies.

Research Question

What are the strategies that successful business leaders in the Middle East use to successfully implement flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies in their organization?

Interview Questions

1. What flexible office schedule(s) and remote workplace policies have you implemented in your organization?
2. What strategies did the leaders of your organization use to implement flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies in your organization?
3. How did leaders of your organization develop these implementation strategies?
4. What key challenges did leaders of your organization encounter before and during the implementation of these strategies?
5. How did leaders of your organization address the key challenges to implementing the successful strategies for flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies?
6. How did you assess the effectiveness of these strategies for flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies in your organization?
7. What additional information would you like to share about the flexible office schedule and remote workplace implementation strategies in your organization?

Conceptual Framework

With increasing uncertainty in business across various industries, leaders of organizations need various tools and techniques to help the leaders make better strategic decisions (Darkow, 2015). However, most leaders know more about strategic decision making in theory but have less experience regarding the practice of implementing strategies (Hourani, 2017). Most organizational leaders have difficulty implementing strategic decisions due to lack of a clear execution plan. Successful strategy implementation includes a series of efforts that transform strategic intentions into action.

A review of the literature indicates that there are two main approaches to the operationalization of strategy implementation: process-oriented and factor-oriented (Hourani, 2017). In my research, the main focus will be on a factor-oriented conceptual framework proposed by Pryor, Anderson, Toombs and Humphrey (2007); known as the 5Ps model. The 5Ps framework indicates direct connections among principles, purpose (strategy), performance, people, and processes (structure), where strategy drives structure, structure drives behavior, and behavior drives results. The 5Ps model includes multiple overlapping constructs within five identified elements, as well as holistically, that can guide an organization towards successful implementation of flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies in their organization. The implementation model involves factors from strategic and tactical perspectives which require strategic decisions as well as specific elements of behavioral and tactical actions.

I selected the 5Ps framework because it provides a comprehensive framework for the successful global implementation of strategies. Pryor et al. (2007) emphasized

strategic implementation as a critical element in successful organizational performance. As Pryor et al. (2007) stated, the major challenge in strategy implementation is coordinating and integrating activities of the participating individuals and functions. Because the 5Ps model integrates and aligns several strategic values, when correctly applied, the framework would require decisions and actions that are strategic but also behavioral and tactical. Therefore, the 5Ps framework is a reasonable conceptual framework for my study.

Operational Definitions

Flexible work policies: *Flexible work policies* are policies that provide employees with autonomy to choose when, where and for how long to work (Azar, 2017; Baeza et al., 2018; Chou & Cheung, 2013; Azar et al., 2018; Fuller & Hirsh, 2019; Gordon, McMullin, & Adams, 2015; McAlpine, 2015; Pitt-Catsouphes, James, McNamara, & Cahill, 2015; Rofcanin, Heras, & Bakker, 2017; Kröll & Nüesch, 2019; Rudolph & Baltes, 2017; Stirpe, Trullen, & Bonache, 2018; Thompson, Payne, & Taylor, 2015).

Flexplace: *Flexplace* is a type of virtual work, using information and communication technologies, to work away from the traditional office environment (Azar et al., 2018)

Flextime: *Flextime*, also known as flexible work schedule, is an organizational arrangement that allows employees to select hours and duration of work (Azar et al., 2018; Kröll & Nüesch, 2019)

Job satisfaction: *Job satisfaction* is an employee's affective or emotional reaction to a job, based on comparing actual outcomes with desired outcomes (Azar, Khan, & Eerde, 2018).

Knowledge workers: *Knowledge workers* are professional and managerial employees, as well as technical people, whose work involves high levels of creativity, intellectual skills and theoretical rather than contextual knowledge (Wilczyńska, Batorski, & Sellens, 2016).

Person-environment fit: *Person-environment fit* refers to the degree to which an individual pairs with his or her environment, such as one's organization, group, job or vocation (Irak & Mantler, 2018).

Strategy implementation: *Strategy implementation* is the communication, interpretation, adjustment, and endorsement of strategic plans (Hourani, 2017).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

According to Ellis and Levy (2009) *assumptions* are any facts or statements that is taken for granted by the researcher. The first assumption in this research is the choice of the framework. The 5Ps model is strategic and tactical that can align structure, system, leadership behavior, human resource, values, and management processes (Pryor et al., 2007). I assumed that the 5Ps framework is suitable and effective in exploring strategies for implementing flexible schedules and remote workplaces policies from a new perspective.

Second, I assume that participants in this research understand the purpose and scope of the study and that their participation and responses can impact research results significantly. All research participants will receive and sign a consent form before data collection, in which the purpose of the study, voluntary nature of the research, risks, and privacy guidelines were explained in detail. Finally, I assume that my participants will answer me truthfully, and with honesty, acknowledging that anonymity and confidentiality will be preserved.

Limitations

According to Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018), *limitations* are anything that constrains actions and create potential weaknesses in a research; elements that are not selected deliberately and are beyond the researcher's control. The first limitation of this research is time. The study is conducted over a specific interval of time to fulfill the requirements for the Walden University doctoral study. The time limitation narrowed down the research to a single case study design, which is dependent on conditions occurring during that time. Second, due to the extensiveness of the research problem, a sample of convenience is selected to represent the whole. Therefore, the research results may not be generalizable to a larger population. Third, due to the limited number of leaders of organizations who have successfully implemented flexible work schedule and remote workplace policies in their organizations, the choice of the target population was lessened.

Delimitations

According to Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018), the term *delimitations* is defined as limitations deliberately selected and imposed on the study by the researcher to control the research environment. There are several delimitations imposed on this research. First, given the autonomy, the research question was selected purposefully to raise awareness of the strategies that leaders can use to implement a flexible schedule and remote workplace policies in their organizations. Second, the geographic region of the Middle East was selected because the existing literature indicated that research on implementation strategies of flexible schedule and remote workplace policies is rare.

The third delimitation imposed on this research was the choice of the industry. Accounting and financial services employees and consultants are considered *knowledge workers* who have high-level skills and education and execute responsibilities that involve expert thinking and complex communication proficiencies (Wilczyńska et al. 2016). Knowledge workers engage in network and mobile work (MacEachen, Polzer, & Clarke, 2008), hence they can significantly benefit from flexible schedule and remote workplace policies.

Significance of the Study

The domains of work and family have become obscure (Veld et al., 2016). Consequently, the desire for flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies by male and female employees has increased. However, business leaders in the Middle East lack strategies for successful implementation of flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies. The business implication of this study is to provide practical

strategies for implementing flexible office schedule and remote workplace policies in the Middle East, which could enable business leaders to increase workforce productivity and organizational profitability.

The implications for positive social change include advantages to both employees and employers. The positive social changes for employees may include a better work-life balance (Groen, Triest, Coers, & Wtenweerde, 2018), offering more time to spend on volunteering activities, time to study and continue education (Chen & Fulmer, 2018), time to exercise and stay healthy, as well as time to offer their skills to society by teaching and training others. The positive social change for employers includes reduced cost of office, utilities, and equipment (Bird & Brown, 2018), which enables organizations to hire more employees, and in turn, can reduce the unemployment rate in societies. Additionally, flexible work policies would allow organizations to hire individuals who can work but are unable to leave home due to specific disabilities or other physical constraints (Wittmer & Lin, 2017) and increase tax revenues to support social programs. Finally, reduced emissions and traffic can benefit the environment.

Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Globalization and advancements in technology have transformed the way that industries carry out work, moving away from a traditional way of working in fixed office locations and fixed hours to knowledge-based management (Azar, 2017; Ko & Kim, 2018). The transformation from traditional ways to more hybrid approaches was observed by MacEachen, Polzer, and Clark (2008) as well as by Wassels, Schippers, Stegmann, Bakker, van Baalen and Proper (2019), who confirmed that developments in information

and communication technologies across the globe transformed the norms of standard employment to a new model in which employees have fewer restrictions as to where and when they work. Furthermore, Galea et al. (2014) reported that the dynamic and competitive environment of business markets, as well as changing gender roles, has caused a shift in conventional work patterns.

Today, organizational leaders acknowledge that their employees require resources that would help them to fulfill work and life responsibilities simultaneously. Bird and Brown (2018) argued that work hours are not merely indicators of the hours that employees spend performing job responsibilities, but a burden that can destabilize individuals' lives in society. The nature of work has changed from the perspectives of both the employers and employees (Azar, Khan, & Eerde, 2018). The modern way of working is flexible and based on nonstandard hours and diverse workplaces (MacEachen, Polzer & Clarke, 2008). According to Thompson et al. (2015), to support their employees, organizations are providing employees more control over boundaries by offering flexible work arrangements. The flexibility policies in organizations enable knowledge workers such as academics, consultants, and analysts, to work from different locations and to work at their convenient times.

The foundation of flexible work policies dates back to 1967 when the political economist and management consultant, C. Kaemmerer, advised the German aerospace company Messerschmitt-Bolkow-Blohm to provide various work schedules to its employees who were suffering from late arrivals every day due to morning traffic and adverse road conditions (Bird & Brown, 2018). According to Bird and Brown (2018),

company management was surprised to see that, over a short period, absenteeism dropped by 40%, turnover rates declined dramatically, and tardiness dissolved. Berkery et al. (2017) stated that the concept developed further during the 1970s when organizations realized the advantages of the flexible work policies and decided to provide the same to their employees who suffered from arriving late due to dropping off children at school.

There are various types of flexible work policies that organizations can offer to their employees. These flexibilities are usually divided into two main categories of flexible schedule and flexible workplace (Capnary et al., 2018; MacEachen et al., 2008; Pitt-Catsoupes et al., 2015; Sweet et al., 2016). As Klindžić and Marić (2019), Kröll and Nüesch (2019), and McAlpine (2015) explained, flextime allows employees to choose when to start and finish their work tasks; flexplace enables them to work from home or any other location outside the traditional office. Compressed work weeks, job sharing, part-time work, and flexible shift work are some examples of flextime (Azar et al., 2018; Almer, Cohen & Single, 2003; Berkery, Morley, Tiernan, Purtill, & Parry, 2017; Klindžić & Marić, 2019; Kossek, Lero, & Fast, 2018; Thompson & Lautsch, 2015; Peretz, Fried, & Levi, 2018; Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014; Stirpe et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2015). Teleworking and working from home are some examples of flexplace (Berkery et al., 2017; Groen et al., 2018). There are other types of flexible work policies such as reduced work assignments (Groen et al., 2018), and workload redesign (Bray et al., 2018) that enable employees to save time and energy for their various roles and responsibilities (Azar et al., 2018). Depending on the nature of the policy, leaders of organizations can use different implementation strategies. In this research, I will use a single case study

qualitative methodology to explore a strategy that organizations can use to successfully implement different types of flextime and flexplace policies successfully.

Various researchers and practitioners have described each type of work flexibility in detail. According to Chen and Fulmer (2018), a compressed workweek allows employees to work long hours every day but reduces the number of days in a workweek. A compressed workweek policy keeps the same total hours for employers while providing flexibility for the employees. Job sharing is another type of flextime, where two employees can split the work between themselves in such a way that their combined weekly work hours are equivalent to the standard workweek (Klindžić & Marić, 2019). Part-time flexibility specifies how many hours an employee is required to work during a day and how a flexible shift enables employees to work in alternative time shifts for one day (Klindžić & Marić, 2019). Teleworking is a type of flexibility that allows employees to work from other locations than the central office during the regular working hours, using electronic media to interact with others internally and externally (Choi, 2018; Groen et al., 2018; Klindžić & Marić, 2019). Choi (2018) claimed that telework is more beneficial and appropriate for highly professional and flat-structured organizations that promote autonomy and flexibility than for traditional bureaucratic organizations.

Different types of flexible work policies can have diverse impacts on employers and employees (Lerodiakonou & Stavrou, 2017). Mostly, the policies are perceived as supportive and mutually beneficial arrangements that the employers and employees agree on to ensure employees' work meets the organizations' needs (Thompson et al., 2015). Sweet, Pitt-Catsoupes, and James (2017) claimed that a flexible work schedule and

remote workplace policies could either operate as formal arrangements in an organization or informal arrangements between the supervisors and the employees. Also, organizational leaders can choose to offer all or some flexible policies to all or some of their employees (Almer et al., 2003). The choice of the type and number of flexible work policies offered by organizations depend on many factors, which will be discussed in this research.

Researchers compared the ratings of flextime versus flexplace of the employees who are provided both options. Research results of Thompson et al. (2015) indicated that respondents rated flextime slightly higher than flexplace policies. Lerodiakonou and Stavrou (2017), and Wickramasinghe (2012) also confirmed that flextime is one of the most preferred and used work flexibility policies. McAlpine (2015) explained the reason and stated that schedule control is a mechanism that supports work outcomes, lessens role conflicts, increases job satisfaction, and improve job commitment.

Galea et al. (2014) explained that the advantages of flexible schedule policies often outweigh the cost of implementing them. Flextime policies allow for adjustments to schedules and provide opportunities for meeting caregiving responsibilities (Lero & Fast, 2018; Townsend, McDonald, & Cathcart, 2017). However, providing a combination of flextime and flexplace has proven to be the most beneficial arrangement for both employers and employees (Avgoustaki & Bessa, 2019; Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014; Thompson et al., 2015). In this research, I will focus on successful implementation strategies for a combination of a flexible schedule and remote workplace policies for knowledge workers in the Middle East.

Flexible work policies are tools that help employers to make the best use of their workforce, and they help employees to have control over their volume of working hours and the location of work (Ko & Kim, 2018). The impact of flexible work policies was first analyzed during the 1970s, with a particular focus on the performance of the employees. The concept was later developed and expanded to cover work-family issues and influence on health and employee satisfaction, profitability, and turnover and absenteeism (Klindžić & Marić, 2019). Irak and Mantler (2018) named increased personal well-being of employees, promotion of positive lifestyle by offering free time to exercise, enhanced job satisfaction, improved productivity, increased organizational loyalty and commitment, and reduced stress and turnover rate as some of the essential advantages of flexible work policies.

According to Kotey and Sharma (2019), flexible work policies are recognized and recommended by the International Labor Organization (ILO), the European Union (EU), and the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Though 28% of workers in the United States and 35% of workers in the United Kingdom have access to flexible work policies (Wood, 2018), these policies remain restricted and disproportionately allocated for most employees in organizations (Sweet, Pitt-Catsouphes, & James, 2016). As Pitt-Catsouphes et al. (2015) stated, workplace flexibility policies were identified as essential management tools decades ago, but the percentage of organizations that practice these policies is still small. However, the increasing interest in flexible work policies among scholars and practitioners during the past 20 years indicates the importance of the subject (Berkery et al., 2017). Therefore, in

this research, I will explore successful implementation strategies for flexible schedules and remote workplaces in the Middle East will be explored.

The organization of the literature review is based on the 5Ps strategy implementation framework. The framework represents five main elements of purpose, principle, people, processes, and performance. Additionally, some common themes were identified related to implementing a flexible work schedule and remote workplaces. Work-family balance, mental and physical health, the role of human resources, employee turnover and retention, organizational culture, and job satisfaction are the themes that will be linked to the 5Ps elements and discussed in detail.

The literature review begins with resources from the Walden University Library multidisciplinary research databases including (a) Academic Search Complete, (b) Emerald Insight, (c) Science Direct, (d) Business Source Complete, (f) SocINDEX, and (g) Social Science Citation Index. The search terms included (a) flexible work arrangements, (b) flexibility policies, (c) strategy implementation, (d) 5Ps conceptual framework, (e) impact of work flexibility, (f) work flexibility outcomes, (g) work-family balance, (h) relationship between work flexibility and employee health, (i) relationship between work flexibility and job satisfaction, and (j) impact of work flexibility over employee retention and turnover intentions. The review included 86 articles and books; 85% of the articles were peer reviewed and less than 5 years old from the date of CAO approval. The resources used for collecting articles for the literature review were academic libraries, websites, and research databases.

Strategy Implementation

Flexible work policies are tools that are used to help employees meet family responsibilities. During the past decade, increased employee autonomy, particularly regarding schedule and workplace flexibility, has increased employee productivity (Viorel, Lonut, & Andreea-Oana, 2018). The ability to control time for personal and professional responsibilities has increased employee pride in their work and positively impacted employee performance (Baeza et al. 2018). Klindžić and Marić (2019) explained that flexible work policies could be valuable in achieving maximum efficiency in organizations. Flexible policies enable organizational leaders to allocate job positions and work tasks based on the organizations' requirements and the nature of the work. Flexible work policies create an environment in which employees' expectations are satisfied, and as a result, they may respond by staying in the organization for a more extended period and helping the organization to accomplish its goals (Stirpe et al., 2018). According to Azar et al. (2018), job satisfaction is a reliable indicator of increased employee commitment and decreased absenteeism. The difficulty, however, is maintaining a balance between the goals of the company and the needs of the employee.

Flexible work policies must be formulated to accommodate organizational and individual needs at the same time (Dhaini et al., 2018). However, recent studies indicate that work flexibility is either employee-oriented, focused on globalization and changing market demands, or employee-oriented, intended to support personal needs of the workforce (Berkery et al., 2017; Hill, Grzywacs, Allen, Blanchard, Matz-Costa, Shulkin, & Pitt-Catsoupes, 2008). As Vasconcelos et al. (2015) stated, the inclinations and needs

of all stakeholders Must be assessed to find and implement the most appropriate flexible work policies in their organizations. Similarly, Kossek et al. (2015) posited that the planning and implementation of flexible work policies would fail if the needs and interests of all stakeholders, including the nonusers, are not considered. Taking a case-by-case approach in developing or implementing flexible work policies can create conflicts and lead to implementation failure if the policies do not balance all stakeholder priorities (Kossek et al., 2015). Therefore, accommodating all stakeholders' interests is one of the critical success factors in implementing flexible work conditions.

Many large and international organizations have embedded flexible work policies into their global strategy (Hill et al., 2008), but the implementation of the policies remains a challenge (Azar, 2017). As Okumus (2003) reported, more than 70% of organizations fail to implement their innovative strategies. Similarly, Hourani (2017) claimed that 66% of organizational strategies are never implemented, and of those implemented, 95% of the employees are either not aware of them or do not understand the strategy. Organizational leaders and supervisors still lack awareness and understanding of flexibility policies that would fit their organizations best and help their employees balance work and family responsibilities (Galea et al., 2014). They may be aware of the benefits of flexible work policies, but they may not know how to implement them. Hourani (2017) named excessive focus on financials, fragmentation, lack of processes, lack of leadership capabilities, ineffective coordination, lack of direction, lack of appropriate monitoring system, and lack of technology as some of the common problems in implementing strategies.

Essentially, strategy implementation is the communication, analysis, adjustment, and representation of strategic plans. Okumus (2003) mentioned that multiple factors must be considered in strategy implementation. Considerable effort is required to take concepts, resolutions, plans, and policies and turn them into processes and action plans (Hourani, 2017). A strategy can be considered as a path for organizational development and success. Zeps and Ribickis (2015) mentioned internal processes, systems, and people as some of the critical elements that must be considered for the successful implementation of a strategy.

Similarly, Hourani (2017) stated that strategy implementation is all about creating the right organizational structure and an active control system. Strategy implementation can be treated as an iterative process that enables organizations to utilize resources and gain competitive advantage. Some organizational leaders choose to transform the strategy implementation into key performance indicators where continuous monitoring and controlling is more comfortable, whereas some leaders of organizations choose to create an organizational culture that encourages people to implement the strategy.

There are many different frameworks for successful strategy implementation. Okumus (2003) named Waterman's framework, proposed in 1980, as one of the most cited strategy implementation models where the relationships between strategy, structure, style, staff, skills, and smaller goals are the determinants of success. Alternatively, Hourani (2017) explored McKinsey's 7S model, which focused on structure, system and processes, strategy and purpose, shared values, style, and resources, and staff. One of the most comprehensive frameworks in strategy implementation is the Pryor et al. (2007) 5Ps

model, where focus on purpose, principles, people, processes, and performance can lead to successful strategy implementation and improve organizational performance.

5Ps framework. Experienced executives recognize that implementation is as critical as developing an efficient strategy; implementation is one of the critical elements of sustainable advantage in the 21st century (Pryor et al., 2007). A carefully planned and communicated strategy for implementing policies and processes may lead to success; however, even with such preparations, many organizations still fail to implement their strategies (Zeps & Ribickis, 2015). The thought often deceives leaders that formulating and communicating a strategy is equivalent to successful implementation. On the contrary, data reported by Pryor et al. (2007) showed that many well-formulated and communicated strategies failed to be implemented because executives failed to bridge the gap between knowing how to do it and doing it.

Okumus (2003) claimed that the lack of a practically sound framework is one of the main reasons that strategy implementation fails in organizations. The 5Ps strategy implementation model introduced by Pryor et al. (1998) is a comprehensive framework derived from a mixture of fundamental features and viewpoints. In this framework, organizations are considered as holistic entities and systems that exist to accomplish a particular objective. Also, it is assumed that the leaders and the executives set the strategic direction of each organization. The 5Ps model integrates and aligns several strategic, value, culture, systems, behavioral, and measurement and feedback theories. Hourani (2017) described the five components of the 5Ps framework:

1. Purpose: the organizational vision, mission, goals, objectives, and strategies;

2. Principle: the supervisory behaviors, assumptions, and attitudes about how the organization has to operate and conduct business;
3. People: the employees, customers, suppliers, and all other stakeholders;
4. Processes: the authority and accountability mechanisms, as well as means of responsibility and control;
5. Performance: the metrics, measurements, and expected results.

Sometimes organizational leaders lack a clear vision. They focus instead on daily activities (Pryor et al., 2014). Lack of vision and clear direction can negatively impact organizational systems from the principle, people, processes, and performance points of view. The principles of the leaders of organizations dictate how the employees should operate. According to Pryor et al. (2007), principles are usually based on integrity, ethics, and core values of an organization, and employees are expected to work accordingly. The core values and principles determine the decision-making methods and employees' behavior.

Employees are fundamentals of the people element of the 5Ps model. People are the process owners whose work is based on the organizational principles to accomplish the organization's purpose. As Pryor et al. (2014) emphasized, proper alignment of human resources is the key to the successful implementation of any strategy, because, without clear ownership of processes, stakeholders fail to communicate the requirements, and consequently fail to achieve the purpose.

Traditionally, processes have been associated with the stages of transforming inputs such as workforce, materials, and machines into outputs. The 5Ps strategy

implementation framework extended processes and added responsibility, controls, accountability, and authority elements (Pryor et al., 2014). Organizational structure, performance appraisal mechanism, and policies and procedures are some of the essential processes in every organization. Process owners need to recognize and analyze the limitations and impacts of them on the organization and align the processes accordingly.

Family-friendly policies are positively associated with employees and organizational performance (Heras et al., 2017). Kotey and Sharma (2019) argued that flexible work policies such as flexible work schedules and remote workplaces could improve performance. The 5Ps strategy implementation framework emphasizes the performance measurements that reveal the status of the organization. Gahlawat and Kundu (2019) confirmed that performance measurement is associated with organizational effectiveness. Zeps and Ribickis (2015) agreed that continuous monitoring performance is a vital factor in ensuring successful strategy implementation. Moreover, Hourani (2017) highlighted the importance of performance measurement in the model and stated that consistent and continuous feedback is critical in implementing strategies successfully because the performance results can be used to iterate the processes and guide people in the right direction.

In summary, purpose drives principles and processes, principles and processes drive people, and people drive performance (Hourani, 2017; Pryor et al., 2007; Pryor et al., 2010; Pryor et al., 2014). The 5Ps strategy implementation framework needs strategic and tactical decisions and actions. Although the individual elements of the model are significantly crucial in leading an organization, alignment and appropriate integration of

these elements can significantly improve the chances of successful strategy implementation (Pryor et al., 2007). According to Pryor et al. (2014), without perfect alignment between purpose, principles, people, processes, and performance, even the best developed and communicated strategies might fail.

Purpose

For most people, work and family are the two main domains in life (Michel et al., 2011). For most adults, the family role is an added responsibility that needs time and devotion (Mercado & Dilchert, 2017). The growing number of employees' responsibilities in life obliges organizations to take into account the family responsibilities of employees as well as their work responsibilities (Glass & Estes, 1997; Galea et al., 2014). As a result, organizations and governments are continuously investigating methods to introduce and implement flexible work policies (Azar et al., 2018). The need for such flexibilities arises from increased dual-earner families, single-parent households, and increased men's participation in caregiving in families (Chou & Cheung, 2013; Lyness, Gornick, Stone, & Grotto, 2012; Veld et al., 2016; Trzebiatowski & Triana, 2018). According to Mercado and Dilchert (2017), nontraditional gender roles have resulted in the incapability of employees to expect their partners to dedicate themselves to one domain only fully. Lero and Fast (2018), Michel et al. (2011), and Hyland and Prottas (2017) mentioned the increased number of working hours per individual as another reason that individuals juggle between work and life responsibilities.

Caregiving can be a challenging responsibility. Gordon et al. (2015), Michel et al. (2011), and Lero and Fast (2018) confirmed that competing for daily responsibilities cause many individuals to struggle in balancing work and family responsibilities. As Hill et al. (2008) mentioned, individuals have a finite amount of energy, but often they are overwhelmed with excessive responsibilities and role conflict. Organizations realize that integration of work and family responsibilities is not a personal issue anymore, but a public one (Lero & Fast, 2018). As a result, the work-family balance turned into the primary purpose of offering flexible work policies in organizations.

Work-family balance. To support employees in balancing their work and family responsibilities, organizations across the globe invest time and money to present formal and informal flexible work policies such as flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies (Bourdeau, Ollier-Malaterre, & Houlfort, 2019; Peretz et al., 2018). Hyland and Prottas (2017) argued that work-family balance is one of the most critical criteria that employees reflect on when they want to choose a job. Many workforce individuals prioritize work-family balance over salary and promotions (Ko & Kim, 2018). As a result, there is an increasing interest in implementing flexible work policies in organizations to help employees balance their work and family responsibilities (Baeza et al., 2018). Work-family conflict appears when the responsibilities of one domain exhaust the time and energy an individual requires to go through the responsibilities of the other domain (Azar et al., 2018). Glass and Estes (1997), Lero and Fast (2018), Michel et al. (2011), and Lyness et al. (2012) described work-family conflict as an inter-role conflict, where pressure from the work and family are incompatible. Since resources

such as time and energy are scarce, organizations and family units perceive each other as competitors. Mukanzi and Senaji (2017) claimed that both employees and employers experience work-family conflicts. Consequently, individuals are continuously evaluating methods to manage work and family responsibilities (Graham & Dixon, 2017). Lack of flexibility at the workplace can create severe conflicts between work and family.

The result of the incompatibility between work and family responsibilities is role spillover or role strain (Lero & Fast, 2018). Role spillover occurs when work responsibilities interfere with family responsibilities or vice versa (Lero & Fast, 2018). Hyland and Prottas (2017) defined role spillover as an intraindividual process, where thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are transferred from one role to another. There are two types of roll spillover, strained-based and time-based. Strain-based spillover occurs when an individual carries stress from one role to the other role; time-based spillover occurs when responsibilities in one role, exhaust the time required to carry out the responsibilities of the other role (Azar et al., 2018; Hyland & Prottas, 2017; Mercado & Dilchert, 2017; Michel et al., 2011). Lero and Fast (2018) named lower life satisfaction, poor physical and mental health, and high levels of burnout as some of the consequences of work-family conflict and role spillover.

Providing flexibility to employees is important because the flexibility offers them convenience in planning rather than reducing working time or responsibilities (Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014). According to Azar et al. (2018), the planning behavior of employees is an indicator of time management, where individuals can structure and arrange their responsibilities based on their available resources.

Furthermore, employees' autonomy in planning can positively influence their behavior and performance in other domains (Azar, 2017). Lack of employee work-family support can force employees to search for resources somewhere else. Bourdeau, Ollier-Malaterre, and Houlfort (2019) argued that having supportive tools such as schedule flexibility, workplace flexibility, onsite childcare, or a health clinic enable employees to be available at work for longer hours.

Role spillover and tension, due to the incompatibility of work and family responsibilities, influence individuals negatively (Graham & Dixon, 2017; Hyland & Prottas, 2017). Stirpe and Zárraga-Oberty (2017), as well as Berkery et al. (2017), claimed that women experience more significant spillover between work and family responsibilities because they endure greater responsibilities at home. Fritz and van Knippenberg (2018) identified these extra responsibilities and excessive role spillover as an essential barrier to women's hierarchical advancement at work. Conversely, Anthias and Mehta (2003), and Leineweber, Falkenberg, and Albrecht (2018) argued for the significance of gender in social processes, stating that men and women depend on each other to fulfill family responsibilities. Similarly, Graham and Dixon (2017) stated that a parallel decrease in workforce expectations had not supported increasing household responsibilities for men. Graham and Dixon (2017) conducted research and verified that men are subjected to responsibilities of both being a successful financial provider as well as a good father; hence, men started reporting higher levels of work-family conflict.

According to Michel et al. (2011), role pressure and work-family conflict are two-directional: work to family and family to work, producing negative impact from one

domain to the other. Azar et al. (2018) confirmed the same and stated that based on evidence, work-to-family conflict is strongly related to job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Consequently, giving the employees autonomy to choose where and where to work is critical to them and their families (Bourdeau et al., 2019). Galea et al. (2014) explored the concept through boundary theory and claimed that how individuals reposition between various domains of life to create and maintain balance must be at the center of research about the work-family conflicts.

The focus on work-life balance can be accomplished by work flexibility (MacEchen et al., 2008). In order to reduce work-family conflict and role spillover, organizations introduce flexible work policies (Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2018; Leineweber et al., 2018). Flexible work policies or family-friendly policies address the reconciliation of work and family life (Wiß, 2017). Flexible schedule and remote workplace policies aimed at improving coordination in community and reduction of social problems by reducing work and nonwork conflicts (Capnary, Rachmewati, & Agung, 2018; Chou & Cheung, 2013; Thompson et al., 2015). Dhaini et al. (2018) confirmed that inflexibility or rigid policies at work could result in employees' reduced productivity and turnover.

Schedule flexibility has a negative relationship with work-family conflict (Lyness et al., 2012). Schedule control provides autonomy to employees to develop a frame for work and family responsibilities, relieving them from responsibility conflicts (Chung, 2019). Lero and Fast (2018) researched the recent work-family conflict in 10 different countries and reported that flexible schedules had a positive relationship with lower

family conflicts and greater life satisfaction. Fuller and Hirsh (2019) also confirmed that schedule flexibilities aid employees to accommodate work and family demands, especially in unpredictable circumstances. Hill et al. (2008), and Leroy, Segers, van Dierendonck, and den Hartog (2018) conducted similar research using the person-environment fit theory, where the responsibilities of individuals were considered relative to the resources available to them to fulfill those responsibilities. Results indicated that schedule flexibility is considered as a reliable tool in helping employees to respond to their conflicting responsibilities.

Family is the foundation of societies; therefore, providing family-friendly or flexible policies in organizations is perceived as critical in increasing harmony in society (Chou & Cheung, 2013). Lero and Fast (2018) noted that when an organization provides flexible work policies to facilitate the integration of work and family responsibilities, role spillover, and work-family conflict can be mitigated. In addition to improving harmony in the family, Sweet et al. (2016) reported a significant enhancement in employees' performance. The implementation of flexible work policies increases the sense of responsibility and work-family balance (Capnary et al., 2018). Additionally, work flexibilities are an essential resource for parents, especially mothers in managerial and professional jobs. Fuller and Hirsh (2019), and Lyness et al. (2012) confirmed that mothers could use flexibility policies to combine work and family responsibilities without disrupting productivity and performance.

Flexible work policies can get work done in a more efficient environment where supportive management is central to the business. Ko and Kim (2018) confirmed that the

successful implementation of flexible work policies could be a vital publicity tool for organizations. Aside from setting work-family balance as the purpose of implementing flexible work policies such as flexible schedule and remote workplace policies, the principles of an organization and how it conducts business internally are critical.

Principle

Rapid developments and availability of technology-facilitated fulfilling work obligations through unique settings (Choi, 2018). Many organizations adopted communication and information technologies that eliminated the need for face-to-face conversations to get work done (Ko & Kim, 2018). Flexible work policies, including flexible schedules and workplace policies, became a constitutional rule in the European Union in 1993 (Bird & Brown, 2018). Ko and Kim (2018) claimed that by the year 2000, more than 50% of the organizations in North America offered flexible work policies to their employees. Kossek et al. (2015) reported that by the year 2012, approximately 77% of the American organizations provided schedule flexibility, and 63% provided flexible workplace policies to their employees.

The personal needs of employees are not homogenous. People from different nations have different norms, levels of responsibilities, and obligations in family and society (Baeze et al., 2018). Hill et al. (2008) and Michel et al. (2011) used the role theory and explained that the professional and personal roles are direct results of other people's expectations and what they consider to be a suitable performance for each role. Rana and Malik (2016) stated that the inherent concentration of most organizations on

profit, causes shortsightedness, resulting in missed opportunities in necessary people management principles, which are essential from ethical and social perspectives

Various elements facilitate work-family balance across industries and cultures (Wiß, 2017). The differences in norms and responsibilities imply that some of the organizational policies and regulations might work for some of the employees but not work for the others (Glass & Estes, 1997). For instance, employees who come from collective social backgrounds tend to be highly sensitive to nonwork matters. As Baeze et al. (2018) stated, it is the cultural collectivism that explains how people view themselves as part of a group and treat other people the way they do.

Moreover, employees in different organizations and industries face various formal and informal rules about working conditions that primarily depend on economy and culture (Baeza et al., 2018). Consequently, employees progressively compel organizations to provide personalized treatments rather than adopting the one-size-fit-all processes imposed by the human resources function (Heras et al., 2017). Successful implementation of flexible work schedules and workplace policies require careful consideration of the role of the human resources function in every organization.

Human resource management. Human resource management is a vital function in every organization because all the organizational principles, policies, processes, and resource management takes place in the human resource function (Capnary et al., 2018; Kotey & Sharma, 2019). Human resources have proved to be much harder to manage than any other asset in organizations; organizational leaders are challenged by the complexity and uncertainty that comes with globalization and interconnectedness (Uhl-

Bien & Arena, 2017). Due to continuous communications between individuals, organizational leaders cannot directly control employees at all times; however, leaders need to ensure that all job and work environment elements are designed in such a way that employees are comfortable and motivated to work (Kotey & Sharma, 2019). Klindžić and Marić (2019) recognized human resource management as a source of competitive advantage for organizations because the rules and regulations imposed by the human resources directly influence the organizational performance (Stirpe & Zárraga-Oberty, 2017). Rana and Malik (2016) also considered human resources strategies as a source of competitive advantage for organizations because the strategies are highly path-dependent and ambiguous, hence challenging to imitate by competitors.

Employees usually come from different backgrounds and have distinctive priorities and prospects; Thus, each employee responds to human resources processes and procedures differently (Stirpe & Zárraga-Oberty, 2017). While fundamental human nature values and philosophies are universal, implementation and presentation of these values depend on several variables (Rana & Malik, 2016). Researchers identified some of the critical environmental and demographical elements that can influence the efficiency and success of human resources policies and connected these policies with improved performance and increased job satisfaction. One of the critical elements that can impact the human resources functions, particularly in implementing policies, is culture (Baeza et al., 2018; Peretz et al., 2018; Rofcanin et al., 2017). Generally, culture explains the individuals' norms and reasons for the way they behave (Rofcanin et al., 2017). National culture impacts the way that employees characterize their organizations and the values

they attribute to them, whereas the organizational culture impacts employees' performance, satisfaction, and ethical standards (Klein & Waxin, 2009). Peretz et al. (2018) argued that employees in some cultures show a more positive response to flexible work policies than in others. For instance, collectivistic societies that focus on group benefits may not regard flexible work policies as positively as individualistic societies. Combined, national and organizational cultures are likely to influence the successful implementation of flexible work policies (Galea et al., 2014). Thus, human resource function must be mindful of the organizational diversity and sensitivity to culture for the successful implementation of flexible work policies.

The size of the organization, type of industry, age, gender, religion, education level, and income level of the employees are some of the other elements that can impact efficiency and successful implementation of flexible work policies by human resources function (Galea et al., 2014; Glass & Estes, 1997; Hill et al., 2008; Lyness et al., 2012; Michel et al., 2011; Rana & Malik, 2016; Stirpe & Zárraga-Oberty, 2017). To promote social responsibility, many governments around the world have taken the initiative of providing flexible work policies to their employees (Chung, 2019). Official legislations have been passed to enable employees to request flexible work conditions (Galea et al., 2014). In addition to government entities, larger organizations are under tremendous pressure to be a role model of socially responsible entities by providing formal flexible work policies to their employees (Berkery et al., 2017). Townsend et al. (2017) indicated that small and medium organizations, as well as not-for-profit organizations, who have

less established human resources systems, face less pressure about being socially responsible; hence, they tend to provide flexibility policies informally.

Regardless of the country or location of an organization, the industry also matters while considering flexible work policies (Wiß, 2017). Knowledge workers are a relatively new but dramatically expanding portion of the workforce in most countries (Wilczyńska et al., 2016). These experts are often considered as valuable commodities in every organization that requires excellent outputs (MacEachen et al., 2008). Making efficient and effective use of human capital to achieve organizational objectives is the only target of the human resources function (Rana & Malik, 2016). Therefore, as Wiß (2017) stated, it is critical to understand the value of knowledge workers in every organization, where workplace benefits, such as family-friendly policies, are helpful instruments in attracting and retaining these experts.

Practical implementation strategies need a deep understanding of employee interests by human resources functions (Stirpe et al., 2018). In addition to culture and industry, age is another crucial element that can impact the successful implementation of flexible work policies. Often employees become selective as they grow old; they tend to invest in emotionally meaningful goals because they do not perceive expected future gains outweighing present losses anymore (Stirpe et al., 2018). In addition to the senior employees, the millennial generation is also focused on work-family balance, holding high expectations from their organizations (Capnary et al., 2018). Hence, age can be a deciding factor of how and what human resources implement flexible work policies.

Gender is another influencing factor in the successful implementation of flexible work policies in organizations. Usually, male and female employees are not treated the same in organizations because gender roles are connected to expected behaviors (Baeza et al., 2018). Chen and Fulmer (2018) approximated that women comprise half of the workforce, where most of these women are from dual-earning families, caregivers to children or parents, or professional adults who choose to continue their education and personal interests along with their job. Female concentration is an essential determinant of the number and type of flexible work policies offered in every organization (Glass & Estes, 1997; Stirpe et al., 2018). Flexible work policies tend to be more critical to the female employees because the majority of them have the added responsibility of caregiving, as opposed to the male employees who are sources of income only (Baeza et al., 2018; Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014; Wiß, 2017). Berkery et al. (2017), Peretz et al. (2018), and Wiß (2017) claimed that the number of flexible work policies in an organization increases if the ratio of the female employees is higher than the male employees.

Flexible work policies restructure professional and personal responsibilities to a more desirable layout, which enhances female engagement with work (Sweet et al., 2017). Organizations with a higher ratio of female to male employees on their board of directors, or organizations with a high percentage of women in management and executive positions, usually provide more and better flexible work policies (Sweet et al., 2016). Fritz and van Knippenberg (2018) established that, even though the female leaders are still a minority group due to work-family role conflict, but it is anticipated that

women will dominate leadership positions soon. Wiß (2017) argued that the public sector could be a good role model in gender equality in every society.

Another critical factor in shaping organizational principles, especially in the Middle East, is religion. Rana and Malik (2016) considered religion as an essential shaper of social life in organizations, claiming that consideration of religion in organizations can motivate and inspire employees. In addition to religion, Fuller and Hirsh (2019) considered education level as another essential factor in successful implementation of flexible work policies in organizations; availability of such policies is critical for both highly educated women who are under constant pressure for higher productivity, and less educated women who experience rigid work tasks on daily basis.

Flexible work policies can trigger gender stereotypes (Fuller & Hirsh, 2019). The demographic composition of a workgroup impacts the probability of using flexible work policies in an organization (McAlpine, 2015). Wiß (2017) also wrote that organizations with a higher share of female employees have more flexibility because female employees demand more than male employees. A similar stereotype can be detected in academic researches. Almer et al. (2003) based their study on the assumption that women and not men generally use flexible work policies. Chung (2019) researched with the assumption that women will demand and take advantage of the flexible work policies more than men because they have the primary responsibility of caregiving. Chung (2019) and Lero and Fast (2018) used constituent theory to explain that organizations with a high ratio of women to men face higher internal pressure to consider work-family balance and provide

flexible work policies to their employees. In some cases, male-dominated industries and organizations proved to be intolerant of male employees utilizing flexible work policies.

People

People are the most important asset in every organization. Investing in human capital is one of the critical factors in creating organizational welfare (Black & Venture, 2018; Leroy et al., 2018; Rana & Malik, 2016). Black and Venture (2018) considered people to be the human component of profitability and success in organizations. The success of any organization depends on the capabilities of the people employed to complete the assigned tasks (Graham & Dixon, 2017). As Baran and Sypniewska (2017) stated, treating employees as capital is not only essential but also necessary for accomplishing company goals and gaining competitive advantage.

Earlier, professional work roles and personal family responsibilities were independent domains, where family responsibilities were irrelevant to organizations. However, today, according to Mukanzi and Senaji (2017), leaders in organizations are conscious of the consequences of conflicts between work and family domains. Hill et al. (2008), and Trzebiatowski and Triana (2018) claimed that these conflicts could increase employee burnout and turnover intentions and decrease job satisfaction, productivity, and employee commitment.

Work-life conflicts are everyday stressors that are negatively related to employee health and well-being (Bray, Hinde, Kaiser, Mills, Karuntzos, Genadek, Kelly, Kossek, & Hurtado, 2018). As Bird and Brown (2018) stated, today, employees need to be proactive decision-makers, possess various professional skills, and adapt to shifting market forces

rapidly. Baeza et al. (2018) reported that in developing economies, many employees consider working long hours as a way of providing for the family. Dhaini et al. (2018) confirmed that unordinary work time schedules such as nightshifts, irregular hours, and lack of schedule flexibility could create severe psychological vulnerabilities for employees. Therefore, implementing work flexibilities is essential, and so are implementation strategies that ensure successful implementation.

Additionally, Ruiz and Odriozola-González (2017) confirmed that mental flexibility, or the ability to be present at the moment and mindfully aware of the experiences, is the core value of psychological therapies. Rudolph and Baltes (2017) linked the flexibility of work to better health and more effective outcomes. Mental flexibility and health are especially critical for knowledge workers, as stress is reported to be a regular but significant health issue in this group (MacEachen et al. 2008). Consulting firms, banks, and law firms routinely experience 80 hours of work per week (Bourdeau et al., 2019). Consequently, successful implementation of flexible work policies must be carefully considered by organizations that depend on knowledge workers.

Mental and physical health. Employees in the 21st century are exposed to multiple stressors from competing domains. They have many responsibilities that require their time and energy (Mercado & Dilchert, 2017). Excessive responsibilities and limited resources in either work or life domains create an inter-role conflict that results in stress, which has a negative influence on the physical, mental, and social health of employees (Chou & Cheung, 2013; Lero & Fast, 2018). Work responsibilities can take a significant toll on individuals; therefore, as Wickramasinghe (2012) claimed, leaders of

organizations are actively searching for specific policies, procedures, and programs to reduce their employees' stress and emotional exhaustion.

Competitiveness between businesses has exposed employees to high levels of job insecurity. Increasing job insecurity due to competition, along with other forces, urges employees to protect their jobs, even to the extent of sacrificing their health (Veld et al., 2016). Job insecurity is a chronic stressor with long-term health implications (MacEachen et al., 2008). Michel et al. (2011) found that role conflict, role ambiguity or lack of clarity on responsibilities, duties, and objectives, as well as role overload are the key sources of stress for individuals.

The World Health Organization (WHO) links employees' emotional exhaustion to the workplace characteristics, focusing on four key domains of the physical work environment, the psychological work environment, the health resources for individuals, and the organizational social commitments (Dhaini et al., 2018). Emotional exhaustion is a primary response to stress, leading to cynicism and avoidance as a coping strategy (Ruiz & Odriozola-González, 2017). Dhaini et al. (2018) established a strong relationship between work-family inter-role conflicts and emotional exhaustion and fatigues, which result in reduced personal accomplishments and loss of motivation.

Work-family conflict is one of the factors that impact emotional exhaustion in parents (Leineweber et al., 2018). According to Trezbiatowski and Triana (2018), gender and power distances are essential concepts in employee work-family conflict and emotional exhaustion research. Where work is an essential sphere to men, the family seems to be a more critical sphere to women; women tend to fulfill a disproportionately

larger share of family responsibilities, which leads them to experience greater emotional exhaustion and work-life conflict (Leineweber et al., 2018). The availability of flexible work policies can reduce work-family conflicts and the resulting emotional exhaustion.

Resource loss is another factor that contributes to emotional exhaustion, creating an increased sensitivity in employees (Trzebiatowski & Triana, 2018). Individual features, settings, and environments, energies, or support are some examples of resource losses that increase employees' emotional exhaustion (Heras, Rofcanin, & Stollberger, 2017). Many scholars explored the concept through the conservation of resources theory presented by Hobfoll in 1989, which stated that individuals, naturally, pursue ways to retain their resources. As a result, any threat or losses of these resources can cause stress (Heras et al., 2017; Kröll & Nüesch, 2019; Mercado & Dilchert, 2017; Rudolph & Baltes, 2017; Sweet et al., 2016; Sweet et al., 2017; Trzebiatowski & Triana, 2018; Veld et al., 2016). As both work and family responsibilities require mental and physical resources, balancing the responsibilities between different domains of life is essential to an individual's well-being.

Flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies can help employees to manage their responsibilities better, reduce their stress, and enhance the quality of their work (Gordon et al., 2015). Capnary et al. (2018) claimed that flexible work policies have a positive impact on the mental and physical health of employees because they reduce stress levels. Since unsupportive workplace culture is positively related to physical and mental conflicts, lack of flexibility at the workplace is directly associated with depression in both men and women (Glass and Estes, 1997; Trzebiatowski & Triana, 2018). Lack of

flexibility can also result in physical difficulties such as falling or staying asleep, tension-related pains, changes in appetite, as well as mental struggles such as anxiety and anger. Additionally, Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014) claimed that chronic headaches, depression, heart attack, and cancer are some of the extended consequences of stress. Leineweber et al. (2018) added that exposure to stress for an extended period, not only creates psycho-physiological issues but also disrupts the process of recovery.

The availability of flexible work policies enables individuals to plan for all their responsibilities (Azar et al., 2018). Leineweber et al. (2018) utilized some fundamental occupational health theories such as the self-determination theory, the job characteristics framework, as well as the job demand-control model to confirm that autonomy over work schedule is positively associated with mental health. Employees who have access to flexible work policies reported less psychological health issues (Leineweber et al., 2018). Organizational leaders support their employees' comfort and well-being by providing them job flexibilities (Irak & Mantler, 2018), ultimately enhancing their motivation and performance (Leineweber et al., 2018). However, Kotey and Sharma (2019) stated that flexible work policies could turn into a stressor themselves if the employees are overloaded with work and forced to attend to work responsibilities during their family times.

Lifespan development theories verified that there are age-related disparities in the usefulness of the flexible work policies offered to employees (Rudolph & Baltes, 2017). The workforce is aging due to increased life expectancy, low birth rates, and better healthcare (Stirpe et al., 2018). Hence, the demographics of the workforce compels

organizations to develop more age-tailored work policies (Rudolph & Baltes, 2017). Morelock et al. (2017) reported that the rate of the workforce aged 55 and above is rising now. Nonetheless, physical limitations that are related to increased age decline their workability, their necessary occupational competence, as well as their health and virtues required to manage work tasks (Stirpe et al., 2018). Morelock et al. (2017) further argued that continuous training might mediate workability but does not address physical and mental health; Hence, job flexibility, especially remote workplace policies, can lead to increased workability, helping older employees to continue working.

The presence of various stressors demands better management of multiple aspects of life for the aging workforces (Kotey & Sharma, 2019). Organizations are increasingly interested in facilitating the well-being of the employees today (Rudolph & Baltes, 2017). The use of flexible work policies is a global trend, where most organizations provide schedule flexibility and remote working arrangements to meet employees' needs (Choi, 2018). Providing flexible work policies, especially schedule flexibility, is an indicator of a supportive organization, where the organizational leaders care about the well-being of their employees (Azar, 2017; Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014; Stirpe & Zárraga-Oberty, 2017). Wickramasinghe (2012) associated a flexible schedule with reduced stress and reduced turnover intentions.

Turnover and retention. Globalization, intense competition, diversity, deregulation, and multiculturalism are presenting new challenges in managing employees (Kotey & Sharma, 2019). Organizational leaders now realize that the key to survival in the competitive business world is attracting and retaining high quality, knowledge-based

employees (Gahlawat & Kundu, 2019). Knowledge workers with high creativity and problem-solving skills are expanding globally, encouraging business leaders to focus on offering more favorable conditions during recruitment processes (MacEachen et al., 2008). However, the evidence presented by Mukanzi and Senaji (2017) confirmed that a lack of supportive employee provisions is challenging organizational leaders in recruiting and retaining qualified employees globally.

The lack of supportive family behaviors in organizations can increase employee stress and emotional exhaustion and negatively impact the motivations of the employees (Rofcanin et al., 2017). The majority of the employees are reasonable, logical, and realistic individuals pursuing self-actualization and contentment (Black & Venture, 2018). According to researchers, job dissatisfaction, stress, and emotional exhaustion are the primary causes of job burnout (Dhaini et al., 108; Leineweber et al., 2018). Ruiz and Odriozola-González (2017) defined job burnout as a psychological syndrome that occurs due to the misfit between an employee and a job, which can create psychological and physical issues, feeling of cynicism, and sense of ineffectiveness and incompleteness.

To attract and retain talented professionals, to fulfill organizational recruitment objectives, and to improve competitive advantage, many organizations provide flexible work policies (Azar et al., 2018; Capnary et al., 2018; Peretz et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2015). Flexible work policies proved to be beneficial to both employers and employees (Bourdeau et al., 2019; Thompson et al., 2015) because supportive organizational policies positively impact employees' behavior (Baeza et al., 2018; Rofcanin et al., 2017). Availability of flexible work policies can lower work-family

conflict, increase job satisfaction, improve loyalty and productivity, and reduce absenteeism and turnover (Almer et al., 2003; Azar et al., 2018; Chen & Fulmer, 2018; Chou & Cheung, 2013; Galea et al., 2014; Rudolph & Baltes, 2017), and significantly enhance recruitment process and retention of skilled workers (Shagavaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014). Kotey and Sharma (2019) established that the advantages that flexible work policies offer could build competencies and competitive advantage for organizations.

Kröll and Nüesch (2019) defined turnover intention as an employee's conscious decision to leave the organization. Azar et al. (2018), and Trzebiatowski and Triana (2018) defined absenteeism using the withdrawal theory, stating that employees tend to withdraw from unfavorable work settings and find other environmental conditions that would help them manage their resources and responsibilities more efficiently. Flexible work policies significantly reduce employees' stress levels; hence, they play a critical role in reducing turnover and absenteeism (Berkery et al., 2017; Klindžić & Marić, 2019; Lerodiakonou & Stavrou, 2017; Peretz et al., 2017). Rudolph and Baltes (2017) used the control theory to explain that the way employees perceive work is crucial because it impacts the perception of autonomy. This perception is often linked to employees' commitment to the organization, even if they choose not to use the available flexible work policies (Galea et al., 2014). Irak and Mantler (2018) argued that the mere existence of flexible work policies as an added advantage could improve the person-environment fit perception of employees, even for those who do not use the policies.

Other potential advantages of flexible work policies include the reduced overhead cost in the offices and saving costs of new employee training due to turnover (Choi, 2018). Azar (2017) confirmed that flexible work policies reduce the cost for organizations, saving approximately 13% of the workforce costs. Similarly, one of the international accountancy leaders, KPMG, reported a 4.7 million pounds of savings in the United Kingdom due to the availability of flexible work policies during the recession times (Azar, 2017). Considering all the advantages delivered by flexible work policies, Thompson et al. (2015) concluded that work flexibility is not an added advantage, bonus, or incentive offered by organizations anymore, but a competitive instrument to meet organizational recruitment objectives.

Some scholars argued against flexible work policies and stated that many employees choose not to use these policies because they are concerned about the negative career consequences that flexible work policies can carry (Bourdeau et al., 2019; Chen & Fulmer, 2018). On many occasions, supervisors associate using flexible work policies with lower work devotions and commitments (Bourdeau et al., 2019). The perception of employees not being up to the standard as an ideal worker if they use flexible work policies, as well as the stigma associated with this perception, is still active in many organizations (Azar, 2017; Chung, 2019; Fuller & Hirsh, 2019). Moreover, flexible work policies can stimulate stereotypes and undermine women's careers, requesting female employees to make a tradeoff and choose between career and family. Trzebiatowski and Triana (2018) reported that discrimination is positively related to decreased performance and increased turnover intentions. Fuller and Hirsh (2019) claimed that employers are

biased about mothers' capabilities and commitment to work; evidence shows that mothers who did not have access to flexible work policies suffered from tardiness and absenteeism and were eventually let go.

In addition to career penalties, many employees choose not to use flexible work policies because they felt insecure about their job and missed promotional opportunities as a consequence. According to Kossek et al. (2015), flexible work policies that enable employees to choose when and where to work, reduce physical contact and interaction between employees and cause a feeling of isolation and distance. Communication of job flexibility users is mainly done through emails. These employees often reported left out of the critical meetings and promotional opportunities because others tend to ignore their detailed emails (Chen & Filmer, 2018). As a result, many employees reflect on a broader horizon and do not view flexible work policies as a reward.

The findings of the advantages and disadvantages of flexible work policies from the perspective of the employees are mixed. Nevertheless, most research results indicated that employees who have autonomy over their work schedule and place are more motivated and spend a prolonged period without changing jobs (Hill et al., 2008; Viorel, Lonut, & Andreea-Oana, 2018). Organizations are embedding flexible work policies in their strategies to motivate, attract, and retain talented employees (Azar, 2017; Ko & Kim, 2018; Kotey & Sharma, 2019; Stirpe et al., 2018; Wiß, 2017). Kröll and Nüesch (2019), and Fritz and van Knippenberg (2018) also confirmed that organizations implement flexible work policies in order to enhance organizational efficiency by attracting and retaining talented and motivated employees. Moreover, Almer et al. (2003)

stated that flexible work policies could mitigate the differentially higher turnover rate of women, which helps in maintaining gender diversity at the workplace.

Many research articles indicate the benefits that both employers and employees can receive by implementing flexible work policies in organizations; however, employers eventually implement flexible work policies only if the supposed benefits compensate the cost of introducing such policies (Berkery et al., 2017). According to Evans and Davis (2015), to achieve a competitive advantage that flexible work policies offer, leaders often need to reconfigure their operational capabilities and processes.

Process

Increasing competition between industries and organizations due to globalization is inevitable, but some organizations seem to operate more effectively than others in this dynamic environment (Iljins, Skvarciany, & Gaile-Sarkane, 2015). Uhl-Bien and Arena (2017) claimed that some organizations are taking advantage of the time, turning the challenges of the dynamic environment into opportunities for change. In contrast, other organizations are deficient in the necessary lucidity and pace for change, finding the dynamic environment chaotic and devastating. Nevertheless, the global impact of rapidly developing technologies and human resource management systems is complicated (Cano-Kollmann, Hannigan, & Mudambi, 2018), hence challenging to embed into organizational processes and policies.

The dynamic environment of businesses has also influenced the labor laws and employer-employee relationships (Berkery et al., 2017). Intense changes in the workforce demographics have increased the popularity of flexible work policies (Chen & Fulmer,

2018). Even though both employers and employees are now more attentive to the potential advantages, yet organizations still lack flexible policies that would enable employees to balance their work and life responsibilities (Galea et al., 2014; Gordon et al., 2015). Supporters claim that one of the critical limitations in implementing flexible work policies in organizations is the lack of confidence in defining new processes that can be monitored and measured (Sweet et al., 2016). In addition to challenges in defining measurable processes, Graham and Doxin (2017) stated that the interface between the process alignment and policy implementation also remains a central issue in organizations.

Established work processes have to change in order to enable organizations to respond to opportunities and threats. Gahlawat and Kundu (2019) defined processes as fundamental mechanisms established to enable employees to perform work tasks. As Evans and Davis (2015) stated, work processes are often routinized, but they should be flexible enough to contribute to organizational success. According to Iljins et al. (2015), rapid and continuous changes in the economy and the culture makes it difficult for organizations to respond to changes and adopt new processes; however, process routines affect organizational outcomes and should be treated as necessary tools for accomplishing organizational goals.

The adoption of flexible work policies can influence process routines significantly. Flexible work policies can complicate the coordination of work in organizations (Sweet et al., 2017). Reallocation of work, managing resources, and other administrative processes involved proved to be costly, time-consuming, and complicated

(Kotey & Sharma, 2019). Managers face complexities in coordinating meetings and continuously monitoring employees' performance when they work remotely or follow a different schedule (Groen et al., 2018; Kossek et al., 2015). Consequently, the main concern for organizations is how managers should address the challenges of changing processes when introducing and implementing flexible work policies. The concern is particularly significant in growing businesses because as the number of employees increases, complications of flexible schedules and remote workplaces increase too (Xu et al., 2018). Iljins et al. (2015) claimed that the challenges of altering processing could prevail if organizational leaders focus on organizational culture.

Organizational culture. Organizations are unique entities with different resources, capabilities, structures, systems, leadership styles, and organizational climate, each of which contributes to organizational success (Hourani, 2017). Iljins et al. (2015) claimed that one of the critical elements of organizational climate is organizational culture; it can be used to explain employees' perceptions of their work environment and job assignments. As Gahlawat and Kundu (2019) stated, while human resource functions invest in developing human capital, organizational leaders and managers need to ensure that the right environment is provided for employees to carry out their jobs.

Organizations with flexible environments protect employees from work-family conflict and role spillovers (Hyland & Prottas, 2017). The availability of flexible work policies in an organization is a representation of the management's good intentions in managing their employees (Chen & Fulmer, 2018). In most cases, it is the availability of flexible work policies and the perceptions of a family-friendly workplace that impacts

employees' satisfaction, more than actually using the policies (Choi, 2018). Kotey and Sharma (2019) used the perceived organizational support theory to explain that the availability of flexible work policies indicate that organizations care about their employees, and are willing to pursue employees' interests along with professional requirements.

Flexibilities offered to the employees should not affect the organization as a whole (Groen et al., 2018). Flexibility policies can be offered either as formal policies or informal policies (Bourdeau et al., 2019; Lero & Fast, 2017; Wiß, 2017). Formal flexibility policies are established as written policies, developed based on existing processes, and offered to all employees across the organization; Informal flexibility policies, however, are discretionary arrangements of managers or human resource function, negotiated individually, and offered to specific employees (Avgoustaki & Bessa, 2019). Even though the number or types of these policies vary at an organizational level, yet they are often offered in such a way that at least some employees can benefit from them (Chen & Fulmer, 2018). Offering a combination of formal and informal flexible work policies may maximize the benefits for both employers and employees.

The role and behavior of the leaders, the supervisors, and the managers in implementing formal and informal flexible work policies are critical (Pitt-Catsoupes et al., 2015; Rofcanin & Bakker, 2017; Sweet et al., 2017). Managers are the gatekeepers of organizational culture, who decide what type, under what conditions, and to which employees flexible work policies are offered (Kossek et al., 2015; Sweet et al., 2016; Sweet et al., 2017). Managers' behavior and attitude towards flexibility at the workplace

is the key element that decides whether employees will use the available policies or not (Galea et al., 2014; Sweet et al., 2017). Choi (2018) argued that employees who work remotely and outside the central offices, such as teleworkers, are usually concerned about their visibility to the managers. Pitt-Catsouphes et al. (2015) stated that employees might be reluctant to use the available flexible policies because they are anxious about the managers' perception of their commitment to work. Thus, a supportive leader or supervisor is vital in successful implementation and of flexible work policies (Bray et al., 2018; Choi, 2018; Mukanzi & Senaji, 2017; Pitt-Catsouphes et al., 2015).

Although diversity generates competitive advantage for organizations in attracting and retaining talented employees, yet it can create conflict if it is not managed well (Abaker & Al-Nasr, 2019). Flexible work policies can intensify the perception of unfairness among employees because they are usually assigned in an unequal manner (Sweet et al., 2017). Employers often depend on the principle of equity and offer flexible work policies to employees who are most likely to increase work intensity or enhance performance outcomes (Chung, 2019). Other employers might provide flexible work policies only to specific employees, such as employees with strategic importance or employees whose nature of work is compatible with flexible work. Nonetheless, Chen and Fulmer (2018) concluded that when organizations offer too many formal flexible work policies, employees treat them as standardized rights. To overcome these problems, Chung (2019) suggested that the implementation of flexible work policies as a high-performance strategy in organizational culture might reduce the current stigma.

Leaders of organizations exercise control over employees by monitoring their behaviors, outputs, performance, and commitment (Bourdeau et al., 2019). In response, employees utilize flexible work policies to balance their work-family responsibilities and gain some control over the time and the location in which they work (Chen & Fulmer, 2018). As Lyness et al. (2012) stated, flexible work policy benefits are maximized by increasing employees' perception of control. For instance, knowledge workers are usually given set targets and goals; having discretion over how to achieve the set targets and goals, empowers them rather than controlling them (MacEachen et al., 2008). However, Choi (2018) argued that many organizations resist flexible work policies due to deficiencies in controlling, organizing, and supervising employees remotely.

Groen et al. (2018) used control theory to explain that excessive behavior control can decrease flexibility and have a negative influence on employees' performance and motivation. The theory explores control mechanisms that include extreme controls, such as prescriptions at the task level and frequently monitoring employees' outputs and targets (Groen et al., 2018). Using the same theory, Wood (2018) also confirmed that excessive manager control harms the work-life balance of employees who are using flexible work policies and create a sense of job insecurity.

Family supportive organizational culture reduces the power of managers' behavior on the employees who use flexible work policies. Michel et al. (2011) linked organizational or managers' support to social support and claimed that social support must lead to reduced time and energy required for fulfilling responsibilities. Rofcanin et

al. (2017) stated that when managers' behavior is aligned with organizational values, employees establish a sense of attachment and perform better.

Managers need to demonstrate trust by moderately monitoring users of flexible work policies rather than directly controlling their work (Kossek et al., 2015). Developing suitable implementation strategies that would align organizational processes with flexible work policies is crucial. Lack of flexible work policies leads employees to identify their resources as insufficient for managing work and family responsibilities simultaneously; hence, they attempt to change their condition by increasing absenteeism or reducing the performance (Klindžić & Marić, 2019; Kröll & Nüesch, 2019). The availability of flexible work policies plays an essential role in the performance of the employees.

Performance

The performance outcomes of implementing flexible work policies in organizations can be categorized into nonfinancial performance and financial performance. Job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and turnover are some of the most common nonfinancial performance variables (Klindžić & Marić, 2019). As Hyland and Prottas (2017) stated, work and home are entangled in the 21st century. Inter-role tensions usually influence the productivity, satisfaction, and performance of employees in both domains (Graham & Dixon, 2017). Although both male and female employees value fulfilling professional and personal responsibilities, yet research results demonstrated that gender differences such as caregiving involve and overload women more than men (Lero & Fast, 2018). Consequently, men are reported to be more successful than women in

managing work and family responsibilities (Stirpe & Zárraga-Oberty, 2017). According to Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014), there is a positive relationship between work-family balance and work performance.

Lack of time to fulfill responsibilities and limited emotional resources can negatively impact performance and outcomes at work (Mercado & Dilchert, 2017). The daily lives of most employees largely depend on their working hours, which include the number of hours, timing of the work, and degree of autonomy over the schedule (Leineweber et al., 2018). In order to survive the competition in the dynamic and everchanging markets, employees must make deliberate decisions concerning the best time and place to work (Wassels et al., 2019). Azar (2017) explained that the concept of time management could be deceptive, as time cannot be managed because it is an unobtainable element in nature. However, employees can make better use of it if they are provided with appropriate tools.

In addition to the nonfinancial performance boost, organizations are implementing flexible work policies globally to improve organizational performance (Kröll & Nüesch, 2019). Flexible work policies can enhance organizational performance by increasing employees' productivity and innovativeness, leading to increased profitability (Klindžić & Marić, 2019). Kotey and Sharma (2019) also confirmed that flexible work policies increase job satisfaction and result in a return on labor and reduced turnover intentions. However, flexible work policies can have an adverse impact when the employees' opportunistic behaviors result in a lack of cohesion and trust in the organization.

Better time management and planning has a direct influence on job performance and job satisfaction (Azar, 2017). According to Chou and Cheung (2013), and Chung (2019), employers provide flexible work policies to enhance performance outcomes by decreasing absenteeism and increasing motivation. Hill et al. (2008) further stated that the goal of flexible work policies is to improve employees' ability to fulfill all their personal, professional, and community needs. When employees can manage their work and family responsibilities simultaneously, it is ultimately the organization that benefits from increased efficiency, effectiveness, satisfaction, and productivity.

Job satisfaction and outcomes. Analysis of the existing literature in the field of personnel management indicated that the availability of flexible work policies is directly connected to employees' attitudes and work outcomes (Choi, 2018). Flexible work policies, or family-friendly policies, enable employees to balance their various roles and responsibilities, which is positively correlated with desirable work outcomes (Chen & Fulmer, 2018; Choi, 2018). Baeza et al. (2018) and Lyness et al. (2012) also confirmed that access to flexible work policies increases employee morale, job satisfaction, commitment, and loyalty.

Productivity, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction are the most common outcomes of flexible work policies (Kröll & Nüesch, 2019; Lyness et al., 2012; Stirpe et al., 2018). Azar et al. (2018), Baeza et al. (2018), and Kröll and Nüesch (2019) defined job satisfaction as a positive feeling that results from the gratitude of a job's experience. Heras et al. (2017) claimed that flexible work policies are one of the tools

that provide high autonomy to employees; the resulting balance in work and family responsibilities improves performance and job satisfaction.

Wilczyńska et al. (2016) explored the concept of job satisfaction and productivity through the discrepancy theory, presented by Locke in 1976. According to the discrepancy theory, job satisfaction is gauged by measuring the gap between the employees' ideal job and the actual job, an emotional state that overcomes the employees by perceiving the job valuable and fulfilling (Azar et al., 2018). Similarly, Morelock et al. (2017) used Lewin's (1935) perspective to explain that a person and the environment interact with each other regularly, and it is this interaction that determines the behavior of the person.

Furthermore, Wilczyńska et al. (2016) used Herzberg's motivator hygiene theory to divide the elements of job satisfaction to level of achievements, level of personal development and recognition, and physical factors. Moreover, the social exchange theory relies on the norm of reciprocity and social contracts to theorize the relationship between flexible work policies and employee outcomes (Choi, 2018). According to researchers, when employees feel valued, and recognize that their organizations care about their well-being, they feel obliged to give back to the organization by putting in an extra effort to increase their productivity and perform better (Azar, 2017; Chen & Fulmer, 2018; Galea et al., 2014; Klindžic & Marić, 2019; Kotey & Sharma, 2019; Peretz et al., 2018). Stirpe and Zárraga-Oberty (2017), and Klindžic and Marić (2019) further explained that from the social exchange theory lens, employees regard flexible work policies like a higher sign of gratitude, investment, and respect by employers who are willing to build long-

term relationships with their employees. Therefore, employees reciprocate the same and enhance performance.

Employee loyalty and satisfaction are the most critical factors that contribute to maintaining high performance (Capnary et al., 2018). Flexible work policies enhance employees' and organizational performance and job satisfaction by offering alternative forms of schedule and workplace (Capnary et al., 2018; Klindžic & Marić, 2019). Azar (2017) noted that employees feel most responsible when they have autonomy over their schedule and workplace. Chen & Fulmer (2018), Fuller and Hirsh (2019), Lyness et al. (2012), and Wassels et al. (2019) reported a definite performance improvement when employees have control over their schedule because schedule flexibility reduces exhaustion and disturbance that can impair an individual's performance. Likewise, Xu, Hoof, and Nyheim (2018) confirmed a positive relationship between schedule flexibility and job satisfaction. Employees, who have autonomy over their schedule and can accommodate their family responsibilities, may work fewer hours, but they have to work harder, increasing their performance in return (Bray et al., 2018).

Also, the mental health of employees has a direct relationship with their performance and job satisfaction (Capnary et al., 2018). Wilczyńska et al. (2016) confirmed that job dissatisfaction harms employees' mental and physical health, which can, in turn, reduce their performance. Role spillover and conflict can increase the stress level in employees and negatively impact their performance (Wickramasinghe, 2012). Mukanzi and Senaji (2017) noted that when work and family responsibilities are not balanced, role conflict decreases employee commitment and lowers performance.

Bird and Brown (2018) claimed that a flexible work schedule provides personal and social benefits to employees. Similarly, Kotey and Sharma (2019) argued that productivity enhancement benefits the workplace, as well as advances economic and social outcomes for societies. Ecological systems theory described this by stating that an individual is best understood by studying his or her interactions with the surrounding people and environment (Hill et al., 2008). Choi (2018) also used ecological system theory to establish that the interactions between the individual and environment ultimately decides the behavior outcomes of employees; therefore, organizations that implement and promote flexible work policies reduce employees' stress and improve their job satisfaction.

Rofcanin et al. (2017) challenged the shared beliefs of other researchers and stated that some studies found no relationship between flexible work policies and employee performance. Similarly, Wilczyńska et al. (2016) claimed that, contrary to common beliefs, empirical studies showed no direct relationship between job satisfaction and performance. Instead, job satisfaction is directly related to life satisfaction. Employees who enjoy higher life satisfaction are more satisfied with their jobs, but this satisfaction does not necessarily enhance their performance. Ko and Kim (2018) explained the phenomena through the theory of planned behavior and stated that intention is a motivator that directly impacts the individual's decision about whether to perform a particular task or not. Consequently, employees who have access to flexible work policies may still choose not to perform well.

Transition

Section 1 comprised a summary of this qualitative single case study concerning strategies for successful implementation of flexible work schedules and remote workplaces policies in organizations. A purpose statement and a research question were developed. Also, an industry and a target population were selected. Additionally, this section included the nature of study and a conceptual framework. The section was completed by including the outcomes of an exhaustive literature review and supportive information.

Section 2 of this research will include details of the project that will help answering the research question. Information such as role of the research, research method and design, and population sampling will be presented in section 2. Moreover, information regarding data collection instruments, techniques, organization, and analysis, as well as reliability and validity of the data will be presented in section 2. This research will end with section 3 presenting research findings, application to professional practice, and implications for change.

Section 2: The Project

According to the literature, flexible work policies such as flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies are beneficial to employers and employees. Flexibility in organizations allows employees to balance work-family responsibilities, which positively impacts their mental and physical health, improves their performance, reduces their absenteeism, and increases their retention (Almer et al., 2003; Azar et al., 2018; Chen & Fulmer, 2018; Chou & Cheung, 2013; Galea et al., 2014; Shagavaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014; Rudolph & Baltes, 2017). Implementation of flexible work policies, however, often stops at the initial phases in most organizations (Pitt-Catsoupes et al., 2015). As Almer et al. (2003) argued, failure to understand important factors that influence the initial stages of flexible work policies implementation can cause serious damages to the process. In this section, information about research method is presented. The information includes the role of the researcher, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and reliability and validity of the research.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study is to identify and explore the strategies that leaders in the accounting and financial services industry can use to successfully implement flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies in the Middle East. Flexible policies in the workplace have advantages for both employees and employers (Galea, Houkes, & Rijk, 2014). By implementing flexible work policies, employees can benefit from reduced stress level and a better work-life balance (Gordon, McMullin, & Adam, 2015), which enables them to invest more time in serving

communities. According to Wittmer and Lin (2017), by implementing flexible work policies, employers can benefit from lower turnover rates and hiring people with disabilities who can only work from home, which can reduce unemployment rates.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. Interviews are used as the main source of data in qualitative research; therefore, the interviewer is not invisible or distant (Karagiozis, 2018). My role as an instrument in this study will include collecting, organizing, and analyzing data. I will recruit participants and conduct interviews. Later, I will transcribe recordings, and analyze data. In this role, ethical issues and moral conflicts occur (Karagiozis, 2018). To avoid bias that can impair judgement due to closeness to the participants, I will

- triangulate data by verifying collected data with other sources;
- ask participants to review the results;
- continuously reevaluate and challenge existing assumptions;
- demonstrate positive regard for all cultures, races, genders, and ages;
- build trust between myself and the participants;
- actively avoid confirmation bias; and
- remain focused at all times.

Participants

The participants in this study will be organizational leaders and managers who have successfully implemented flexible work schedules and remote workplaces policies, as well as the employees who use the flexibility policies. The eligibility condition is

successful implementation of flexible work policies in the Middle East, regardless of culture, educational level, gender, or age. It is critical to control the depth and comprehensiveness of data collection in qualitative research (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014). As Dworkin (2012) stated, the depth of data is not determined by the number of participants; it is determined by the characteristics of the sample size. As the researcher, I will ensure appropriate depth of data to enhance validity and reliability of results.

I will use multiple strategies to gain access to participants. First, I will identify eligible organizations by searching online and offline business directories in the Middle East. Next, I will contact organization leaders through emails followed by an introductory meeting to ensure that they have successfully implemented flexible work schedules and remote workplaces policies. Following the shortlisting of eligible organizations, I will visit them in person to discuss my objective and their ability to provide data for my research. Finally, depending on the strength of the responses I receive, I will select one organization to conduct my study. I have no limitations in traveling across the region; therefore, the eligibility condition is successful implementation of flexible work policies.

To avoid any bias or ethical conflicts, I will share participants' rights and interview protocols with all participants. Also, I will meet with participants at least once before the official interview to build trust. Moreover, I will obtain approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study. The IRB is responsible for protecting human rights. According to Walden University's regulations, students are not permitted to collect data before receiving approval from the IRB (Walden University Center for Research Quality, 2020). The IRB require students to go

through the process of providing participants with consent forms and other ethical documents before proceeding with data collection. I will complete all necessary processes and receive IRB approval before conducting this research. The IRB approval number for this project is 05-27-20-0947852.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

The qualitative method was selected as the appropriate method for this research because the qualitative method is based on a research question with specific focus on applied and theoretical findings through field study in natural conditions (see Park & Park, 2016). The qualitative method emphasizes exploration, understanding, and contextualization. Most qualitative studies include an inductive approach, which enables the researcher to initiate work through observations about a specific area (Barczak, 2015). Because the aim of this study is to explore strategies that organizational leaders use to successfully implement flexible work schedules and remote workplaces policies, the qualitative method was deemed suitable. Additionally, the qualitative method enables the researcher to take a holistic view of the topic (Park & Park, 2016). A qualitative researcher is aware of the nature of reality and is intimately engaged with the context of the research. Qualitative researchers can explore the how and why of the story in ways that quantitative researchers cannot (Yates & Leggett, 2016). To identify successful strategies, I need to be closely involved in the lived experiences of participants. The qualitative method will allow me to build relationships and trust while exploring the phenomenon.

Quantitative and mixed methods were not appropriate because I did not construct hypotheses numerical data will not be needed to answer the research question.

Quantitative methodology is appropriate for examining relationships between variables and describing trends (Yates & Leggett, 2016). The main objectives of quantitative methodology is to predict and control occurrences, test hypotheses in controlled environments, examine the relationships among variables, and generalize findings (Park & Park, 2016). Even though quantitative methodology offers a high degree of precision, findings are from a two-dimensional perspective in comparison to the strong, deep explanations that the qualitative method offers (Yates & Leggett, 2016). Therefore, quantitative methodology was not suitable for this research because I am not testing variables or identifying any trends for successful implementation of flexible work policies.

Research Design

Qualitative methodology includes various designs. Case study, ethnography, action research, grounded theory, and narrative research are some of the approaches of conducting qualitative research (Saunders et al., 2015). I selected the case study design for this research. A case study is defined as the exploration of a bounded system through detailed, in-depth data collected over time (Beverland & Lindgreen, 2010). Case studies are often focused on understanding the characteristics and complexities of a particular case or bounded system that is worth exploration (Park & Park, 2016). I selected this design because I am interested in successful strategies to implement flexible work schedules and remote workplaces policies in the Middle East.

The case study design has been favored by researchers in practice-oriented subjects such as education, management, and social sciences (Starman, 2013). The case study design is usually selected by researchers who have little control over the occurrences yet need to study a contemporaneous phenomenon within the real-life context (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Suryani, 2008; Yates & Leggett, 2016). I selected the case study design because I have no control over the events of successful implementation strategies in organizations but I can study them in a real-life environment. As Beverland and Lindgreen (2010) stated, case studies are flexible methods that enable the researchers to explore complex, evolving interactions in industrial markets.

Case studies have two main methods: single case studies and multiple case studies (Yin, 2018). In the current study, I will use the single case study method. A single case study is a comprehensive, detailed description of an individual case that characterizes the case and the related processes (Starman, 2013). Suryani (2008) claimed that single case studies offer greater details about a phenomenon. The single case study method will enable me to observe the features of an organization and explore strategies that led to successful implementation of flexible work policies.

Another reason for selecting the single case study over the multiple case study is that individuals tend to share and understand other people's experiences better when they are explored in a real-life context. A single case study enables the researchers to spend time with their participants in research locations, have personal contacts with them, and construct certain meanings about the events in a social context (Suryani, 2008). Single

case studies have a high potential to achieve high conceptual validity (Starman, 2013). Finally, I selected the single case study method because it will enable me to explore the complexities of successful flexible work implementation strategies. Starman (2013) and Yates and Leggett (2016) explained the reflexive nature of the method and confirmed that the single case study method can help researchers explore the complexities of the targeted phenomenon.

Population and Sampling

Population

The selection of participants is the first step in collecting data (Englander, 2012). The absence of statistical analysis in qualitative studies enables the researchers to be creative in choosing the target population (Ishak & Bakar, 2014). I selected knowledge workers, specifically the accounting and financial services employees and consultants in the Middle East, as the population of interest for this research. Knowledge workers are the emerging and expanding group of experts who are becoming the norm in the region (Wilczyńska et al., 2016). Knowledge workers are expected to use their high level of knowledge and experience to enhance the performance of organizations (MacEachen et al., 2008).

The main reason I selected knowledge workers is because they have irregular, long working hours. According to Bourdeau et al. (2019), knowledge workers, especially consultants, sometimes work up to 80 hours per week. Irregular, long working hours can impact the work-family balance, physical and mental health, and motivation and performance of employees. Furthermore, technology has proved to be one of the most

strategic assets for organizations because it enables them to improve their performance and competitiveness (Xu et al., 2018). As Choi (2018) and Viorel et al. (2018) stated, digital transformation and the rapid growth of communication and information technology have enabled employees to carry out work tasks from anywhere at any time. Because knowledge workers spend long hours gathering and analyzing data through email and sophisticated computer software, they may benefit from flexible workplace policies. To retain knowledge workers, leaders of accounting and financial services organizations have started moving away from traditional, fixed working hours (MacEachen et al., 2008). Therefore, leaders of accounting and consulting firms were deemed suitable as the population for this study.

Data Saturation and Sampling

One of the key steps in research design is to find an appropriate sample. Sample selection often depends on the research question and the research framework (Sargeant, 2012). Generally, sampling has two types: probability sampling and nonprobability sampling. Many expert researchers recommended nonprobability sampling for qualitative studies (Ishak & Bakar, 2014; Suri, 2011). In this study, I will use nonprobability sampling. According to Ishak and Bakar (2014), the main purpose of sampling in qualitative studies is to collect specific cases about certain events that can explain or expand the topic of interest. Techniques such as haphazard, accidental, or convenient sampling are easy to use; however, these methods often produce ineffective and unreliable results (Ishak & Bakar, 2014). Cases are usually selected based on their relevance to the topic rather than representing a population. In this study, I will use

purposeful sampling to select an organization in which flexible work schedules and remote workplaces policies were successfully implemented.

Selection of a representative sample in qualitative studies is purposeful.

Researchers tend to select samples who can provide information that can be used to answer the research question (Sargeant, 2012). Additionally, purposeful sampling enables the researchers to select information-rich cases for in-depth study of the topic of interest (Ames, Glenton, & Lewis, 2019). This sampling technique ensures access to information that can help in identifying information-rich cases (Suri, 2011). I chose the purposeful sampling technique because this method will enable me to select a case that can provide a great deal of information about the main success factors of implementing flexible work policies.

Qualitative researchers seldom identify a specific sample size prior to the study. Cases are selected progressively without limiting the number of participants (Ishak & Bakar, 2014; Sargeant, 2012). I selected the single case study design to conduct this research; therefore, a single organization will be selected to collect data to answer the research question. Ishak and Bakar (2014) explained that most qualitative researchers do not discuss sampling procedures in details. The number of participants in qualitative studies usually depends on the amount of information that can fully address the important elements of the study (Sargeant, 2012). Approximately five to 25 interviews are recommended for qualitative studies to reach data saturation (Sim, Saunders, Waterfield, & Kingstone, 2017). Data saturation occurs when the information provided by the research participants is repetitive and no new information emerges from new participants

(Ishak & Bakar, 2014). I will follow these recommendations and collect data until I reach data saturation.

Ethical Research

The qualitative research methodology involves exploring a phenomenon through participants' perspectives. Hence, several ethical dilemmas can arise (Ngozwana, 2018). The main focus of ethical considerations in research is protecting participants from exploitation and respecting their autonomy and right to withdraw (Hall, 2013). I will use an informed consent form to inform my participants about the voluntary nature of participation in my research. A copy of the informed consent form is included in Appendix A of this research. The withdrawal procedure is explained in the informed consent form. Participants have the right to withdraw from this study at any time without any consequences.

There will be no incentives offered in this research. Nevertheless, participants may potentially benefit from new levels of awareness of the business problem. Before collecting any data, I will inform my participants that the study comprises no probable risks regarding participation and that their employment status will not be affected. Also, I will ensure that the participants are aware of their rights about asking questions at any time during the interviews.

The qualitative researchers face ethical challenges such as withdrawal, anonymity, and confidentiality of the participants (Ngozwana, 2018). The participants' anonymity and confidentiality will be protected throughout this study. To protect the rights of participants, I will ensure data security by safekeeping all data on an encrypted

USB device in a safe for five years. After the stated duration, I will destroy all the collected data by breaking the USB and shredding all the papers. All participants received an email invitation (see Appendix B) and a copy of the informed consent form (see Appendix A). Individual participants will have to sign and return the informed consent form before the interviews begin. The protection of participants' rights in an ethical manner will occur under the guidance of the IRB.

Data Collection Instruments

In all qualitative studies, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Karagiozis, 2018). I will be the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in this research. Using multiple sources of data enhances the accuracy of research (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). Interviews, focus groups, reviewing documents, and observations are the most common methods of conducting a case study research (Yates & Leggett, 2016). I will use two different sources to collect data: (a) semistructured interviews, and (b) reviewing organizational documents related to the relevant implemented policies, communication protocols, and other relevant human resources documents.

Interviews

Interviews are one of the main instruments of data collection in qualitative research. Generally, face-to-face interviews are long and rich in-depth (Englander, 2012). Interviews are designed to gather information from participants by active listening and by in-depth discussions (Rossetto, 2014). Technical research projects necessitate semistructured interviews (Englander, 2012). The results of semistructured interviews are

a collaboration of ideas between the researcher and the participant, leading to a single way of viewing reality (Karagiozis, 2018). Each participant in this research will respond to seven interview questions designed to answer the research question.

Review of Documents

The second data collection instrument involves the review of documents available in the participating organization. A review of documents is vital in grasping the facts, history, policy environment, and operationalization of a particular initiative (Hamilton & Finely, 2019). Documents such as human resources policies and procedures, as well as supervisors' and employees' internal communications, can be useful in understanding the strategies for the successful implementation of flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies.

Data Collection Technique

Collecting in-depth, face-to-face, semistructured interviews, and a review of documents will constitute the data collection instruments used in this qualitative single case study. Collecting data through multiple sources of information and analyzing the data using different techniques help organizational researchers to enhance the accuracy of their assessments (Abdalla et al., 2017). Every additional source of data may contain new information. I will begin data collection by conducting semistructured interviews. Later, I will verify the collected statements through a review of documents available in the participating organization.

Karagiozis (2018) argued that researchers must reflect on the totality of the phenomenon. The two sources of data will be useful in accomplishing the triangulation

process. Houghton et al. (2013) defined the term *triangulation* as several methods of studying a single phenomenon, to confirm the accuracy and ensure completeness. Yin (2018) claimed that the triangulation process enables the researcher to compare and contrast data through multiple sources of information and to build a comprehensive perspective of the phenomenon.

After the approval of the IRB, the recruitment of the participants will begin. The primary purpose of the recruitment of voluntary participants is to select a purposeful sample that would represent the population of accountants and financial consultants in the Middle East. In this study, I will prequalify my participant by contacting the organization through an email or a phone call. Next, I will set up an introductory meeting with the leaders or managers of the participatory organization. In this meeting, I will share the background information and the purpose of my research with the organizational leaders. Following the introductory meeting, I will share an official letter of invitation (see Appendix B) and consent form (see Appendix A) with my participants. Next, I will set up interview meetings with each participant. On the day of the interview, every participant will complete and sign the informed consent form outlined in the interview protocol (see Appendix C). After completion of the interviews, I will transcribe the data and prepare an interpretation of each transcript. Once the interpretations are scrutinized, I will share the transcripts with my participants for member checking.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Semistructured Interviews

Semistructured interviews have multiple advantages. First, semistructured interviews are useful in collecting in-depth information and in exploring highly

personalized data (Saunders et al., 2015). Second, semistructured interviews are focused; I will be able to keep the study on track. Third, semistructured interviews are flexible; I can ask the question in any order and use follow-up questions for clarification. Finally, semistructured interviews will enable me to capture both verbal and nonverbal clues.

Semistructured interviews have some disadvantages too. Semistructured interviews can be costly if incentives become necessary. Additionally, since I will be the primary data collection instrument, semistructured interviews might be subjective, including my interpretations. To overcome the disadvantages of semistructured interviews, I will collect data from other resources, such as document reviews.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Review of Documents

According to Bowen (2009), review of documents provide contextualized data on participants' operations and other historical insights. Additionally, review of documents is a nonreactive process; it will not be influenced by the research process (Bowen, 2009). Also, review of documents is a stable process (Bowen, 2009); hence, my presence as a data collector will not alter their material. Review of documents will enable me to track all the changes and all the developments that occur during and after using specific strategies for the successful implementation of flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies. Finally, review of documents is efficient and cost-effective (Bowen, 2009). Bowen (2009) mentioned insufficient details and information in documents that were produced for business purposes and low-quality data as some of the disadvantages of review of documents.

Data Organization Technique

In this research, I will use audio recorders to record the interviews. Also, I will take notes to document the interview environment and the participants' body language to improve the depth of my interpretations. I will assign unique codes to interview data for analysis. During the coding process, I will protect my participants and not use any individual or organization's name. I will use Microsoft Excel to assign letters and numbers to the interview data. The codes will be assigned in such a way that participants' experiences, similarities, and differences are easily identifiable. A copy of all collected material, including the audio records and notes from the interview, and notes from document reviews will be locked in a fireproof safe for five years. I will delete all the audio records and shred all the notes after five years.

Data Analysis

Collecting data through face-to-face interviews will generate narrative data. I will use the thematic analysis method to analyze the collected data. Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017) described the thematic analysis as the method for discovering, analyzing, classifying, labeling, and reporting themes found in a data set, resulting in reliable and trustworthy outcomes. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) defined thematic analysis as exploring and combining important themes that merge to describe a phenomenon. Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019) explained that thematic analysis is an iterative approach where related pieces of data are tied together to answer the research question.

Furthermore, Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) clarified that thematic analysis is a method of recognizing patterns within the data by careful reading and rereading all the collected information. Thematic analysis method includes six steps:

1. extended engagement with data by organizing and storing raw data,
2. using a coding framework to generate initial codes,
3. searching for themes and diagramming to make sense of theme connections,
4. reviewing themes and creating subthemes by returning raw data,
5. producing the final themes and report, describing the coding and analysis process in detail (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019; Nowell et al., 2017).

Thematic analysis is used when the researcher favors in-depth descriptions rather than abstract explanations (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). Data analysis may be the most challenging phase of a qualitative study; therefore, conducting data analysis in a systematic approach can be advantageous. Nowell et al. (2017) listed some of the advantages of using thematic analysis:

- high flexibility that can provide detailed and complex data;
- a less complicated method, suitable for novice researchers;
- highlights different perspectives, similarities, and differences, and generates new insights;
- enables the researchers to handle small and large data and to produce precise final results.

I will use Dedoose software to evaluate and analyze transcribed data from the interviews and to develop themes that would answer the research question. Dedoose is

suitable software because it is user-friendly, and it can analyze open-ended questions. Additionally, Dedoose is a cloud-based software; hence, data are accessible from any computer. Finally, Dedoose is economically feasible and easy to operate.

Reliability and Validity

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument in collecting, analyzing, coding, and interpreting the data; hence, it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure rigor throughout the study (Cypress, 2017; Nowell et al., 2017). Understanding rigor in research processes is crucial. Cypress (2017) defined the term *rigor* as being objective, precise, and accurate. According to Noble and Smith (2017), where the quality of research is vital in operationalizing the results, qualitative studies are repeatedly criticized for lack of rigor and validation of the selected procedures, instruments, and results. Consequently, Darawsheh (2014) argued that increasing the value and number of qualitative studies demand strategies and tools that can improve the rigor and quality of these studies.

Due to potential inherent subjectivity, qualitative studies must be conducted with extreme rigor (Cypress, 2017). To build rigor in qualitative studies, every decision made by the researcher must satisfy the criteria of validity and reliability (Dikko, 2016). Reliability and validity are two significant aspects of every research. Cypress (2017) claimed that validity and reliability are particularly important in qualitative research because the researcher's bias can easily influence the interpretations and the results. Research experts named strategies such as reflexivity, member checking, and triangulation as some of the strategies that that can significantly improve research validity

and reliability in qualitative studies (Abdalla et al., 2017; Birt et al., 2016; Caretta & Perez, 2019; Darawsheh, 2014; Harvey, 2015; Houghton et al., 2013; Leung, 2015; Madill & Sullivan, 2018; Noble & Smith, 2015).

Reliability

Consistency is the core concept in the reliability of qualitative studies (Leung, 2015). Collingridge and Gantt (2019) described reliability in qualitative research as obtaining consistent similarities in the quality of the results to produce a meaningful explanation of the phenomena. Dikko (2016) explained that reliability is achieved when a phenomenon is explored consistently and without bias, and where the same test is conducted at different times to yield the same results. Noble and Smith (2015) associated consistency in research with the selected analytical procedures used to conduct the study. Reliability in qualitative research, or the extent to which research results are repeatable (Grossoehme, 2014), is based on the adequacy of data that consistently supports the research procedures and analysis (Spiers, Morse, Olson, Mayan, & Barrett, 2018).

Data collection and analysis techniques play a vital role in achieving reliable and consistent results in qualitative research. To achieve reliability and consistency, I will use the thematic analysis approach to analyze my data. Thematic analysis is a flexible approach (Nowell et al. 2017), so as Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019) confirmed, thematic analysis can ensure reliable and rigorous results. Generating codes and developing themes may be influenced by my unconscious bias. To minimize bias, I will follow the process of reflexivity. Darawsheh (2014) defined the term *reflexivity* as the process of continuous self-reflection by the researcher to generate consciousness about

one's actions, feelings, and perceptions. Reflexivity will enable me to become aware of my influence on the research process, thus significantly improve transparency. To make reflexivity a tool for achieving reliable results, I will develop a research diary where I can list all my decisions and rationale throughout the data collection and the analysis phase.

Validity

Validity refers to truthfulness in qualitative research. Cypress (2017) and Grosseohme (2014) defined validity as the state of being justifiable, relevant, meaningful, and well-founded. Collingridge and Gantt (2019) referred to validity in the qualitative study as the choice of a suitable methodology and applying that methodology justifiably and rigorously to answer a question. Leung (2015) and Spiers et al. (2018) confirmed that validity in qualitative research is associated with data relevance, where real and accurate experiences of participants are demonstrated. Noble and Smith (2015) referred to validity as the integrity and the precision of data reflected on the results.

Qualitative studies involve an accurate explanation of experiences through interview and observation techniques (content validation), as well as achieving similar results with other measures of the same phenomenon (criterion validation) (Collingridge & Gantt, 2019). Dikko (2016) further explained content validation and criterion validation by stating that content validation is achieved when the research instrument creates an acceptable setting to operationalize the phenomena; criterion validation is achieved by ensuring that the research procedures and tools are appropriate.

There are multiple techniques to achieve validity in qualitative research. Behaving ethically and acknowledging my participants' right to reply to what I will write about

them will be my primary goal. I will use a member checking to achieve research validity. According to Harvey (2015), and Madill and Sullivan (2018), member checking is the most crucial technique for achieving validity in qualitative research. Member validation or member checking is the process of returning the collected data to the participants for their confirmation on the accuracy and on the interpretations of the gathered information (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Harvey, 2015). Caretta and Pérez (2019) stated that member checking is a technique for expanding, iterating, and correcting data with the help of the participants. Madill and Sullivan (2018) simplified the process and stated that member checking could be treated like a follow-up interview, where participants get a chance to debrief before the information is returned to the research.

Procedurally, member checking is very flexible. Member checking involves returning the collected data to the participants, consulting all or some of the participants in the research, and asking them to review, iterate, edit, add, or delete information before publication (Madill & Sullivan, 2018). This technique helps the researcher to ensure that the participants' meanings and perspectives are presented in the research (Birt et al., 2016). Following the interview protocol outlined in Appendix C, I will return the collected data and discuss and negotiate the results with my participants to enhance the validity of my research.

In the member checking process, the data are returned to the participants for their feedback on the accuracy of the data (Birt et al., 2016; Cretta & Perez, 2019; Grossoehme, 2014; Harvey, 2015; Madill & Sullivan, 2018). However, member checking is often complimented by triangulation, checking the data at different phases with

different resources (Caretta & Perez, 2019). Triangulation, or the ability to use different sources of data, is one of the main advantages of qualitative case studies (Houghton et al., 2013). Using a single source for data collection can compromise the results and the conclusion of the research. Triangulation is one of the most accepted standards to avoid impaired conclusions (Abdalla et al., 2017). I will be collecting data from interviews and document reviewing to ensure accurate and trustworthy results.

Transition and Summary

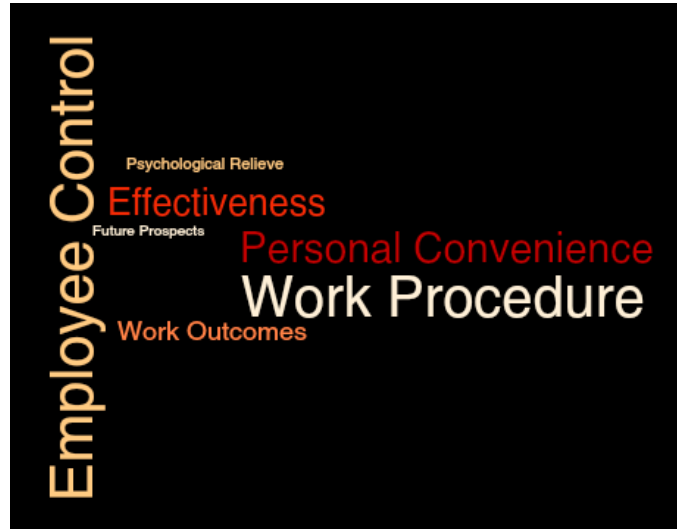
In section 2, the project plan, including research purpose, the role of the researcher, participants, and the research design, were presented. Additionally, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection, data analysis, as well as reliability and validity, were discussed. Section 3 will begin with an overview of the study, followed by the presentation of the results, application to professional practice, and implications for social change. Finally, I will conclude the study by presenting recommendations for action and future study, my reflections, and my conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to identify and explore the strategies that leaders in the accounting and financial services industry can use to successfully implement flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies in the Middle East. Data were collected through semistructured interviews. The interviews were conducted through phone calls or video conferencing to protect the participants and me from the COVID-19 virus. Similarly, to respond to social distancing rules and regulations, review of the documents was done through emails.

Figure 1 demonstrates the phrases that participants used to respond to the questions in their interviews. Dedoose software, which was used to analyze the data in this research, constructed this phrase cloud based on the frequency of occurrence. These phrases were used to shape the seven main themes of this study: (a) employee control, (b) work procedures, (c) personal convenience, (d) effectiveness, (e) work outcomes, (g) psychological relief, and (h) prospects. Participants emphasized the importance of employee control over the daily work, the work procedures documented and communicated to all employees, and the personal convenience provided to them through flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies.

Figure 1*Phrase Cloud*

Data analysis indicated strong connections between employee control and work procedures, personal convenience and effectiveness, and psychological relief and prospects. Employee control and work procedures were the most repeated themes. Additionally, personal convenience, effectiveness, work outcomes, psychological relief, and prospects were repeated the most, respectively. The results of this study can be useful to organizational leaders who are trying to successfully implement flexible office schedules or remote workplace policies in their organization.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question that directed this research was “What are the strategies that successful business leaders in the Middle East use to successfully implement flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies in their organization?” There were two conditions for recruiting a participating organization to help answer this research question through interviews. First, the organization had to be

from the accounting and financial services industry. Second, the work schedule and workplace flexibilities must have been successfully implemented. After using purposeful sampling to recruit participants, I started collecting data by conducting semistructured interviews. Later, collected data were verified by reviewing relevant documents such as process maps, organizational charts, and nonconfidential emails.

Themes

By analyzing the participants' responses to interview questions, seven main themes were identified. The first theme was related to the organizational leaders' mechanisms to control the employees' work. The second theme was related to the work procedures that all employees had to follow to respond to the control mechanism. The third theme was related to the employees' convenience and experiences after they started working from home. The fourth theme was related to the effectiveness of flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies in the organization. The fifth theme was related to their performance and work outcomes. The sixth theme was related to the psychological relief they experienced by working from home and having control over their work schedule. The seventh theme was related to their insights and prospects of flexible work policies.

In addition to these themes, the role of employees' gender in implementation of flexible work policies in organizations has been discussed in the literature. Many researchers have identified a stereotype in organizations, where female employees were considered as primary caregivers; therefore, they had access to more flexibilities than male employees (Baeza et al., 2018; Berkery et al., 2017; Chen & Fulmer, 2018; Glass &

Estes, 1997; Lero & Fast, 2018; Peretz et al., 2018; Stirpe et al., 2018; Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014; Wiß, 2017). Some researchers also based their research on the assumption that it is only the female employees who are primary caregivers who demand, use, and take advantage of the flexible work policies in organizations (Almer et al., 2003; Chung, 2019). To explore existence and role of stereotypes between male and female employees, caregivers and solo-living employees, the data in this study were analyzed based on two factors: (a) gender and (b) living status of the participant. The data saturation point was reached after the fourth interview; nevertheless, interviews continued to strike a balance between male and female participants and between participants who were living alone and those who were living with their families.

Dedoose software was used to generate code occurrence and co-occurrence tables, which provided useful insights for analyzing the themes. In the following discussion of results, I present the individual level insights of the participants in response to interview questions.

Theme 1: Employee Control

The first theme that emerged was employee control. This theme occurred a total of 75 times. Almost all the participants emphasized the significance of employee control over their work. They believed that the two-way control, imposed through customer relationship management (CRM) software, was essential in the successful implementation of flexible work in their organization. According to the employees, the CRM software was initially implemented to control the organization's cost but is now the primary strategy that the organizational leaders used to successfully implement flexible

office schedules and remote workplace policies. The inbuilt software provides total transparency to both the employer and the employees. It is mandatory to report the work planned in the morning and upload the work results in the evening. The directors monitor the work plan and the results daily. The managers then investigate any discrepancies in the planned work and the work performed.

In addition to the directors, the human resource team monitors the performance of the employees on the CRM. Individual employees have a monthly target. Every employee has to generate revenue three times his/her salary every month. Based on the working hours uploaded on the CMR, the human resource and payroll department control the costs and the salaries. Table 1 represents the statements provided by the study participants.

Table 1

Employee Control from the Participants' Point of View

Participant	Participants' comments
Part#1	Work planned and work performed is reported on CRM daily.
Part#2	Mandatory CRM updating occurs once in the morning and once in the evening.
Part#3	Files and reports are uploaded on the CRM, providing total control and transparency employer and employees.
Part#4	Directors analyze and investigate the submitted work every day.
Part#5	Leaders did not command any specific timing about working from home; they only asked to maintain the quality of the work.
Part#6	Leaders use control over employees and individual tasks to control costs.
Part#7	Salaries are based on CRM. Each employee has a target of generating three times his/her salary per month.

This theme can be closely connected to the principle element in the 5Ps framework. As discussed earlier, the principle in the 5Ps framework refers to the

supervisory behaviors, assumptions, and attitudes about the organization have to operate and conduct business. For instance many modern-day leaders of organizations in the Middle East are capitalizing on professional human resource management systems to manage their employees (Klein & Waxin, 2009). Organizational leaders have realized the importance of managing diversity and demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education, and life status as a critical organizational resource (Abaker & Al-Nasr, 2019).

Based on the participants' responses, advancements in technology plays a vital role in modern human resource management. Technology advancements and digital transformation facilitate employees to carry out tasks from anyplace with an Internet connection (Viorel et al. 2018). Analysis of the interviews showed that technology provides control and transparency to both the employers and the employees. Therefore, technology is now a strategic advantage for organizational leaders to control their employees, improve their work experience, increase their job satisfaction, and create competitiveness (Xu et al., 2018). Additionally, all the participants mentioned that technology enables them to communicate with each other and with their clients continuously. However, continuous communication between employees can make it difficult for employers to control employees all the time (Kotey & Sharma, 2019). This statement was confirmed by Participant 7, who stated that it is not possible to control employees in every detail, but as a leader, it is his job to ensure that the work procedures are designed so that the quality of the work remains constant.

Theme 2: Work Procedures

The second theme that emerged from the interview responses was the important role of work procedures in implementing flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies. The work procedures theme occurred a total of 72 times in the interviews. Most employees stated that they have no restrictions on the working hours; some employees start early in the morning and finish by early afternoon, others work during regular office hours, and some employees take occasional breaks during the day and finish their work late at night. However, like a financial audit and consultancy firm, most of the work procedures depend on the clients' needs and requirements. Therefore, visiting clients in their offices is inevitable, making extensive work from home with flexible hours nearly impossible. Table 2 represents the statements provided by the study participants.

Table 2

Work Procedures from the Participants' Point of View

Participant	Participants' comments
Part#1	Even though there are many interactions with the clients, we will only visit them if required.
Part#2	No significant changes in the processes, except that we now have very few client visits.
Part#3	Salaries are now based on CRM. Checking into the system acts as biometrics.
Part#4	Most of the work is done through emails. Meetings with clients are conducted through video conferencing.
Part#5	CRM training was provided to all the employees to show them how to update the system based on the new procedures.
Part#6	We only go to the office if there is a crucial meeting with the director, probably once a week.
Part#7	Minor details are not controlled, it is only the results that matter.

The work procedures theme can be associated with the process element in the 5Ps framework. Processes refer to the authority and accountability mechanisms in an organization. Research has indicated an attentiveness to new business and management processes in Islamic countries (Rana & Malik, 2016). However, due to the rapid developments of technology and human resource systems, the integration of new systems with the existing processes can be challenging (Cano-Kollmann et al., 2018). In response to these challenges, organizational leaders have shown a lack of confidence in developing new policies and integrating new, measurable systems into the existing processes (Sweet et al., 2016). Nevertheless, established work processes must be flexible enough to change to enable organizations to respond to opportunities and threats (Evans & Davis, 2015).

Based on the participants' responses, their organizational processes did not change significantly after the implementation of flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies. The only observed change was the communication mode between the employer, the employees, and the clients. Most of the work is now carried out using emails and video conferencing meetings. Though research has suggested that work processes, especially coordination and allocation of tasks and resources, can become complicated with flexible work policies (Kotey & Sharma, 2019; Sweet et al., 2017), participants in this research reported no complications in coordinating and allocating tasks and resources. Advancements in technology enable them to communicate with each other continuously, allocating, and reallocating jobs and resources. Flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies did not present the organizational leaders and

employees with any challenges. Hence, they experienced a sense of personal convenience.

Theme 3: Personal Convenience

The third theme that emerged from the interviews was the personal convenience felt by both male and female participants who lived alone or with their families. The theme of personal convenience occurred a total of 57 times in the interviews. Most of the participants confirmed that they experience a sense of personal convenience in being able to save time during the day, spend more time with their families, spend time studying for their higher degrees, and balance their other personal responsibilities with work responsibilities. Table 3 represents the statements provided by the participants.

Table 3

Personal Convenience from the Participants' Point of View

Participant	Participants' comments
Part#1	It is very convenient because I can spend more time with my children and they can feel my presence in their lives now.
Part#2	Feels more effective to work from 6:00 am to 2:00 pm and spend the afternoon with family.
Part#3	It is very convenient because it removes all the unnecessary transport between home to office and clients' places.
Part#4	It saves a lot of time and allows me to work more efficiently and study for my master's degree.
Part#5	Personal matters and work can now be balanced, more freedom, and less stress.
Part#6	Minimized movement and transport saves energy and time, allows better planning for personal and professional matters.
Part#7	-

The personal convenience theme can be related to the purpose element of the 5Ps framework. The purpose element refers to the organizational mission, vision, goals,

objectives, and strategies. Family responsibilities are an added restraint for most employers and employees (Mercado & Dilchert, 2017). The conflicting responsibilities cause many employees to struggle in balancing work and family responsibilities (Gordon et al., 2015; Michel et al., 2011; Lero & Fast, 2018). Organizational leaders realize that integration of work and family responsibilities is not a personal issue (Lero & Fast, 2018); hence, the work–family balance turned into the primary purpose of offering flexible work policies in organizations.

Many of the participants confirmed that they had achieved work–family balance by working from home. Participants stated that before implementing flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies in their organization, they had to leave home by 7:30 am to arrive at the office by 8:30 am and leave work by 6:00 pm to arrive home by 8:00 pm. The traffic during the morning and evening rush hours could consume more than 3 to 4 hours of each employee’s time every day. Almost all the participants confirmed that by the time they reach home in the evening, after spending more 12 hours outside the home, they feel too exhausted to attend to family or personal needs.

Research has indicated that both employers and employees experience work–family conflict (Mukanzi & Senjai, 2017), which the participants confirmed. However, participants stated that their organizational leaders are humane and prioritize the well-being of their employees and the importance of balancing work and family responsibilities. As research has suggested, the availability of flexible work policies in an organization represents the management’s good intentions in managing their employees (Chen & Fulmer, 2018). Many of the participants confirmed that they could balance their

personal and professional responsibilities by working from home. Schedule flexibility offers employees convenience because it enables them to plan and control their conflicting responsibilities (Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014). Employees' autonomy in planning can positively influence their behavior and performance (Azar, 2017). Most of the participants confirmed that they had been positively influenced by the flexibility policy, stating they feel relaxed, concentrate better at home, and work more efficiently. All the participants believed that adhering to flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies in their organization has been more effective than traditional work in the office with set working hours.

Theme 4: Effectiveness

The fourth theme that emerged from the interviews was the effectiveness of the flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies experienced by all the participants. The theme effectiveness occurred a total of 53 times in the interviews. Table 4 represents the statements provided by the participants.

Table 4

Effectiveness from the Participants' Point of View

Participant	Participants' comments
Part#1	Work is completed very successfully and effectively on time.
Part#2	Implementation of the CRM made work from home effective.
Part#3	Mental freedom and high concentration at work increased effectiveness.
Part#4	Saving time and energy brings effectiveness to work.
Part#5	The effectiveness of work from home increased productivity.
Part#6	There is an advantage to both employer and employees.
Part#7	A better way of doing our job.

The participants claimed that implementing work from home policy and using a CRM as the primary strategy to implement this policy has been useful. Participants stated that they could concentrate better at home so that they can work more efficiently. The increased efficiency and productivity that resulted in a better performance created job satisfaction in all the employees.

The effectiveness theme can be associated with the performance element of the 5Ps framework. Most employees' daily lives depend on their working hours and the degree of autonomy they have over their schedules (Leineweber et al., 2018). Lack of time to fulfill conflicting responsibilities often negatively impacts employees' performance (Mercado & Dilchert, 2017). However, flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies are tools that provide employees with high autonomy, which results in improved performance and job satisfaction (Capnary et al., 2018; Heras et al., 2017; Klindžic & Marić, 2019). Furthermore, there is a positive relationship between flexible schedule and job satisfaction (Hoof & Nyheim, 2018). The participants also confirmed that autonomy over work schedule, performance, and job satisfaction are directly related to each other.

Participants' statements supported previous research that indicated that productivity and job satisfaction are the most common outcomes of flexible work policies (Kröll & Nüesch, 2019; Lyness et al., 2012; Stirpe et al., 2018). Employee satisfaction contributes to maintaining high performance (Capnary et al., 2018). When the employees feel valued by their organizational leaders, they put in an extra effort to increase their productivity and enhance their performance (Azar, 2017; Chen & Fulmer, 2018; Galea et

al., 2014; Klindžic & Marić, 2019; Kotey & Sharma, 2019; Peretz et al., 2018). The participants stated that having control over work has provided them gratitude toward the organization. This gratitude compelled them to put in the extra effort and work more than 8 hours a day, if necessary. The participants also confirmed that the job satisfaction they experience has positively impacted their performance and job outcomes.

Theme 5: Work Outcomes

The fifth theme that emerged from the interview responses was work outcomes. The theme occurred a total of 42 times. Most of the participants experienced an enhanced work outcome after implementing flexible work policies in their organization. The participants also believed that the enhanced work outcomes were the direct result of job satisfaction. Table 5 represents the statements provided by the participants.

Table 5

Work Outcomes from the Participants' Point of View

Participant	Participants' comments
Part#1	No delays in submitting the reports to the clients; work targets have not been impacted.
Part#2	Working in a quiet environment brings me efficiency; I can complete my work faster than in the office.
Part#3	CRM performance reports showed that the quality of work has improved compared to before.
Part#4	Mental freedom has positively impacted the work results, resulted in better outcomes.
Part#5	Work from home increased productivity, enhances outcomes, I feel good.
Part#6	Having less contact with clients can sometimes negatively impact outcomes, slow down the work.
Part#7	Work from home did not increase or decrease productively, quality, and outcome of the work remains constant.

This theme was associated with the theme of effectiveness, which can both be related to the performance element of the 5Ps framework. The availability of flexible work policies is directly connected to employees' attitude and work outcomes (Choi, 2018). When employees have control over their schedule, the exhaustion and disturbance that can impair performance is reduced, so performance is improved (Lyness et al., 2012; Wassels et al., 2019). Additionally, flexible work policies enable employees to balance their conflicting responsibilities, which is directly correlated with desirable work outcomes (Chen & Fulmer, 2018). Most of the participants experienced enhanced productivity. From the organizational leaders' perspectives, the reports were still of high quality, and there were no delays in submitting the reports to the clients.

Despite flexible work policies improving performance outcomes by motivating employees (Chou & Cheung, 2013; Chung, 2019), it is important that the employees' flexibility not affect the organization (Groen et al., 2018). One of the participants raised a concern about the impact of work from home policy in the long term and stated that having less contact with the clients can delay the current work and negatively impact the relationship between the client and the organization in the future. However, research has suggested that flexible work policies, as an innovative strategy, can enhance productivity, which leads to increased financial performance and profitability (Klindžić & Marić, 2019). Many of the participants also associated enhanced performance with the mental freedom they experience by working from home.

Theme 6: Psychological Relief

The sixth theme that emerged from the interview responses was the psychological relief that employees experienced by working from home. The theme occurred a total of 31 times during the interviews. All the participants stated that they are experiencing a sense of psychological relief and mental freedom, which helps them balance their responsibilities and improve their performance work outcomes. Table 6 represents the statements provided by the participants.

Table 6

Psychological Relief from the Participants' Point of View

Participant	Participants' comments
Part#1	Hypertension, depression, and all the other health issues can be avoided.
Part#2	Mental freedom brings focus and concentration to work; it enhanced productivity.
Part#3	Stress is released. Without stress, employees are willing to work up to 10 hours a day.
Part#4	No need to worry about arriving and leaving the office on time. The stress of the traffic is released.
Part#5	Mental freedom can improve physical health too, gym timing can be managed now.
Part#6	Mental freedom can save energy; that energy can be used to work more efficiently.
Part#7	Enhanced mental health conditions can enhance work quality.

This theme can be associated with the people element of the 5Ps framework. People are the human component of profitability and success in organizations (Black & Venture, 2018). Employees' mental and physical health are often negatively influenced by work–life conflicts every day (Bray et al., 2018). The participants in this research confirmed that daily stressors resulted from commuting to the office, arriving and leaving work on time, being locked up in the office for 9 hours a day, and lack of time for

personal and family matters to exhaust them mentally and negatively impact their performance. But the availability of flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies improves employees' health and results in more efficient outcomes (Rudolph & Baltes, 2017). Flexible work policies enable employees to manage their responsibilities better, reduce stress, and enhance the quality of their work (Capnary et al., 2018; Gordon et al., 2015). Though most of the participants confirmed that they experienced stress, working from home minimized their movements and saved them energy, which they invest in work now. Additionally, mental flexibility and health are especially important for knowledge workers because stress is reported to be a regular and significant health issue in this group (MacEachen et al., 2008). Working from home enables the participants to take occasional rest during the day, release stress, concentrate at work, improve their performance, and even spend more time with family.

Theme 7: Prospects

The seventh and last theme that emerged from the interview responses was participants' prospects about work from home and the strategy their organizational leaders used to implement flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies. The theme prospects occurred a total of 29 times. Table 7 represents the statements provided by the participants.

Table 7

Prospects from the Participants' Point of View

Participant	Participants' comments
Part#1	100% work from home will not be possible; it has to be a combination of work from home and office.

Part#2	Work from home can be useful in the future because it increases efficiency.
Part#3	The organization needs to be strong in IT security and protection of confidential data.
Part#4	Work from home is a non-financial incentive to all the employees; they can avoid the usual stress.
Part#5	Work from home reduces organizational overhead costs in office space and employee transportation.
Part#6	Flexible work policies can positively impact turnover and retention rates.
Part#7	Many monitoring systems that can be installed on employee computers to control their work.

The prospects theme can be associated with the people element of the 5Ps framework. Organizational leaders now recognize high quality; knowledge-based employees are the key to survival (Gahlawat & Kundu, 2019). Knowledge workers with high creativity and problem-solving skills are expanding globally (MacEachen et al., 2008). To attract and retain talented knowledge workers, organizational leaders provide flexible work policies in their organizations (Azar et al., 2018; Capnary et al., 2018; Peretz et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2015). One of the participating organizational leaders confirmed the same and stated that the management team is planning to extend the variety and accessibility of flexible work arrangements in their organization so that they can attract experienced professionals inside the country, and later expand the workforce to overseas.

Lack of supportive family behaviors in organizations can increase employee stress and emotional exhaustion, which can negatively influence employee motivations (Rofcanin et al., 2017). Availability of flexible work conditions can lower work-family conflict, increase job satisfaction, increase morale and commitment, and reduce

absenteeism and turnover (Almer et al., 2003; Azar et al., 2018; Baeza et al., 2018; Chen & Fulmer, 2018; Chou & Cheung, 2013; Galea et al., 2014; Rudolph & Baltes, 2017).

Most of the participants in this research confirmed this claim and stated that, by working from home, they are experiencing fewer conflicts between their personal and professional responsibilities; their job satisfaction and commitment have increased, and they are willing to work for more than 8 hours a day.

Job dissatisfaction, stress, and emotional exhaustion are the primary causes of job burnout (Dhaini et al., 2008; Leineweber et al., 2018). Many researchers claimed that flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies decrease turnover and absenteeism (Berkery et al., 2017; Klindžić & Marić, 2019; Lerodiakonou & Stavrou, 2017; Peretz et al., 2017). Additionally, Choi (2018) argued that flexible work policies could reduce overhead costs in offices and save the costs of training new employees due to turnover. This claim was also confirmed by some of the participants, stating that the organization is reducing office space from 36 stations to 10 stations, saving maintenance and rent overhead costs.

Finally, employees emphasized that work from home must go hand in hand with work from the office. Participants stated that flexible work policies are useful for the future because they increase employee productivity. However, they think they need to go to the office at least one day per week, so meet with other employees and discuss the weekly plan with their employers. Additionally, participants believed that meeting the clients in their offices is mandatory for the business's future. Hyland and Prottas (2017) stated that work-family balance is one of the most critical criteria that employees reflect

on when choosing a job. All the research participants confirmed that access to work flexibilities would be one of their conditions in choosing a job in the future. The availability of flexible work policies is becoming more and more critical to the employees; therefore, flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies will apply to many professionals.

Applications to Professional Practice

Flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies have many advantages. The availability of flexible work policies can improve work-family balance, increase personal and family wellbeing, increase job satisfaction, increase employee commitment, enhance productivity, reduce stress and job burnout, and minimize turnover rates (Irak & Mantler, 2018). Based on the participants' responses, the conflict between personal and professional responsibilities increased the desire for flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies in male and female employees. However, business leaders in the Middle East lack strategies for the successful implementation of flexible work policies.

Flexible work policies often remain at the introductory phases of the implementation curve; therefore, they are still considered as innovative human resource management practices (Pitt-Catsouphes et al., 2015). This study's business implication is to provide practical strategies for implementing flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies in the Middle East.

Flexible work policies are considered as an indication of organizational support for employees to balance their work and family responsibilities. Implementation of flexible work policies enables organizations to attract and retain talented employees,

reduce absenteeism, and improve employee commitment (William, Cathcart & McDonald, 2018). Research shows that employees with more significant work-life conflicts are more likely to take sick leaves due to lower mental wellbeing (Avendano & Panico, 2018). Analysis of data in this research confirmed that organizational leaders could introduce flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies to increase workforce productivity and organizational profitability.

Research has confirmed that organizational culture, policies, and procedures have a powerful impact on the employees' behaviors and perceptions. Organizational leaders can begin implementing flexible work policies by incorporating a culture of trust in their organization (Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014). The organizational culture and work procedures determine the impact of flexible work policies on the employees and the organization (Tomlinson, Baird, Berg & Cooper, 2018). Participants in this research confirmed that the knowledge workers in the field of accounting and financial services could especially benefit from flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies because their work procedures will not change significantly. Since most of the financial advisors, auditors and accountants spend a considerable amount of time outside the office, commuting between clients' offices and conducting meetings to report work progress, implementation of flextime and flexplace policies do not impact their work outcomes.

Rapid and vast advancements in technology have caused a fundamental change in where and when work is performed (BBehavSc, Brown, Kolbe-Alexander & Burton, 2018). Technological advancements enable employees to work in different ways, in

various locations, at any time (Vasconcelos et al., 2015). Organizational leaders can utilize the available technology to implement flexible work policies to meet employee needs, improve performance, and reduce overhead costs. Participants in this research stated that reliance on technology had enabled them to work from anywhere. Using a CRM platform, emails, and video conferencing applications helped them avoid all the unnecessary commutes and meetings, making work more comfortable and efficient for them and their clients.

In addition to organizational culture, managers' attitudes in one of the critical factors in facilitating the application of formal arrangements (Avendano & Panico, 2018). Flexible work policies are usually formed by the decisions and behaviors of the organizational leaders and managers in an organization. Most of the organizations have multiple management levels, where the support for flexible work policies begin at the senior level (William et al., 2018). The managers' behavior is an essential factor that influences the extent to which employees can meet their personal and professional needs (Tomlinson et al., 2018). The participants in this research confirmed that their organizational leaders had shown great support towards them.

Additionally, participants confirmed that their immediate supervisors support them too, and do not pressure them by checking every detail of their tasks. The work performance is monitored through the CRM platform. In case of any discrepancies, late submission, incorrect data entry, or any other issues that employees might experience at home, managers would guide them.

There is a general tendency to implement a single flexible work policy or a bundle of practices in organizations rather than a holistic and strategic approach (Tomlinson et al., 2018). It is vital to take a strategic approach to implement flexible work policies across the organization. Such practices must be sustainable and meet the individual needs and preferences of all the employees.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for social change include implemented flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies in organizations that would benefit both the employers and the employees. Employers can benefit from improved productivity, loyalty, and committed the workforce. As a result of the increased loyalty and commitment due to favorable work conditions, employee turnover and unemployment rates can decrease in societies. Additionally, flexible work policies would allow organizations to hire individuals who can work but cannot leave home due to specific disabilities or other physical constraints (Wittmer & Lin, 2017) and increase tax revenues to support social programs. Finally, flexible work policies can reduce employers' overhead costs, such as office rent, utilities, and equipment. With employees working from home, required office spaces, emissions, and traffic can be reduced.

Organizations are the rules of the game in a society; organizations are developed to shape human lives and interactions (Tomlinson et al., 2018). Based on the findings in this study, the positive social change for employees includes a better work-life balance, an enhanced sense of job satisfaction, and improved outcomes. The availability of flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies enable employees to save time

and energy for participating in voluntary activities in society. Additionally, employees can utilize the saved time and energy to nurture their children, continue their education to higher degrees, and offer their skills to the society. Employees also experience psychological relief, which can reduce crime rates in societies.

Recommendations for Action

The employment scheme in the 21st century changes continuously, requiring novice concepts and perspectives that would enable the employers to recognize and apprehend the reconfiguration of employment and careers across the globe (Tomlinson et al., 2018). The diversity in gender, age, living conditions, and other general changes have transformed the employees' expectations and requirements from their jobs. The male and female, parents, and solo-living employees seem to benefit from flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies equally.

Researchers are now focusing on aspects of employees' lives, such as the importance of their wellbeing, social lives, leisure, sports, and health (Wilkinson, Tomlinson & Gardiner, 2018). This research showed a secure connection between employee mental health, job satisfaction, commitment, and productivity. I recommend the organizational leaders to consider the implementation of work flexibilities in their organizations by relying on the advancements of technology in the Middle East.

Organizational processes cannot be understood in isolation; processes must be conceptualized to enable leaders to understand how flexible work policies can be implemented and made sustainable across the organization (Tomlinson et al., 2018). A human resource policy is said to be consistent when it aligns with other human resource

policies and procedures, is applied accurately, and is communicated openly (Williams et al., 2018). I recommend organizational leaders in the Middle East to adopt a holistic approach in implementing flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies in their organizations.

Managers' attitudes and cultural support are critical in facilitating and uptake of flexible work policies by employees (Avendano & Panico, 2018). Managers' support can have a significant influence on reward systems, top-management openness, and a family-supportive culture (Williams et al., 2018). Evidence shows that utilizing flexible work policies creates a stigma that results in adverse career outcomes for employees, indicating an unwillingness to work or being productive, which negatively impacts employee wages and promotion chances (Padavic, Ely & Reid, 2020). I recommend organizational leaders and managers to minimize the stigma of using flexible work policies by focusing on the performance and work outcomes and treating all the employees equally.

I will share the results of this research with organizational leaders in the Middle East through scholarly journals and business publications. I will also deliver the findings of this research through meetings and conferences. Finally, I will share the results of this research through formal and informal conversations and meetings with all the interested managers and friends.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the results of this research, I offer five recommendations researchers can use when conducting future studies.

- First, due to time constraints, this research was conducted using a single case, which can limit the results. This research should be repeated on a larger scale, using multiple cases to reach generalizable results.
- Second, this research should be repeated using different industries and target populations to understand the impact of various flexible work policies on different work conditions in the Middle East.
- Third, the qualitative case study approach was used to achieve in-depth, detailed, lived experiences of participants in this research. This research should be repeated using the quantitative method to measure the extent of the relationship between various types of flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies on work-life balance, mental and physical health, job satisfaction, and productivity of employees.
- Fourth, the results indicated a sole reliance on technology to implement flexible work policies in this research. This research should be repeated to explore other strategies that can help organizational leaders to successfully implement flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies in their organizations.
- The last recommendation is to repeat this research to focus on organizations' financial gains when they implement flexible work policies. The overhead costs savings, employee loyalty, and customer satisfaction can have a significant impact on the financial records of organizations with flexible work policies.

Many scholars investigated the availability and implementation strategies of flexible work policies and their relationships to work-family balance, job satisfaction, employee performance, and turnover intentions across American and European countries such as Bulgaria, The Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom, as well as other countries such as Canada, Japan, New Zealand, India, and Russia. However, the Middle East context was never explored (Azar et al. 2018). There are relatively less researches about work flexibility conditions in the Middle East than the United States and Europe (Peretz & Levi, 2018; Baeza et al., 2018). Therefore, it is imperative to conduct a study that explores implementation strategies of flexible work policies in the Middle East.

In addition to new and unstable work conditions, the technological advancements and developments in business strategies and policy-making have transformed jobs and occupations over the last half centuries (Tomlinson et al., 2018). The organizational leaders are now focused on helping employees in their conflicting responsibilities with the assumption that flexible work policies are gender-neutral in design, but in reality, these policies mostly serve working parents, especially working mothers (Wilkinson et al., 2018). So it is crucial to conduct future research on the stereotype that organizational leaders and managers impose on organizations' flexible work policies. The findings in this research are context-specific and cannot be systematically deduced to industries with different settings. Therefore, additional research in different organizations, industries, cultures, and sample populations is required to achieve generalizable results.

Reflections

The Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) program at Walden University was challenging but worthwhile. I started the journey with a definite goal: to achieve a higher education degree that can positively impact my vision and expand my business horizons. The critical thinking and problem-solving skills were the two most essential competencies I achieved in this journey. Initially, I was doubtful about the processes of professional academic research; however, as I continued the research by following the step-by-step instructions, I developed the confidence to complete my journey.

The topic of this research, strategies for successful implementation of flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies, was selected due to personal and professional interest. I often worked as a freelance project manager in Europe, benefiting from the flexible work policies that organizational leaders offered to their employees. The experience of the advantages that came with job flexibilities made the absence of such policies even more conspicuous in the Middle East. I decided to implement flexible work policies in my organization; however, I could not find a model organization or a comprehensive research work that can help me understand the variety of implementation strategies and mechanisms that can be used. So it became my desire to explore and publish research that would help organizational leaders and employees in the Middle East.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to explore strategies that organizational leaders can use to successfully implement flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies

in the Middle East. Investigation of this business problem was from the perspective of organizational leaders and managers of financial and accounting services in the United Arab Emirates. The participants were selected through purposeful sampling. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews and review of documents. The interviews were conducted through phone calls and video conferencing to respect the social distancing rules imposed for the prevention of the COVID-19 virus.

Seven themes emerged from the research interviews (a) employee control, (b) work procedures, (c) convenience, (d) effectiveness, (e) work outcomes, (g) psychological relief, and (h) prospects. As an expanding portion of the workforce, knowledge workers who participated in this research experienced a sense of job satisfaction and improved productivity that resulted from the work-life balance and psychological relief that flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies offered to them. The participants also confirmed that the implementation of flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies did not change their work processes significantly.

This research indicated strategies organizational leaders and managers can use to implement flexible work policies successfully. Organizational culture and processes, reliance on technology, balanced levels of trust, and control between the organizational leaders and the employees are some of the essential findings of this research. The research results can be useful to organizational leaders in the financial and accounting services, as well as other leaders trying to attract and retain professional employees in the Middle East.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study of strategies for successful implementation of flexible work schedules and remote workplaces policies in the Middle East. The researcher is inviting organizational leaders, managers and employees who have experienced flexible work policies in accounting and financial consultancy environments in the United Arab Emirates. This informed consent form is a part of the process that would allow you to understand this research before deciding to participate.

The name of the researcher is Vida Moradinasab, a doctoral student at Walden University. If you agree to be a part of this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in a 1-hour interview through a phone call or video conferencing regarding strategies for successful implementation of flexible work schedules and remote workplace policies.
- Ms. Moradinasab will record the interviews to ensure the data collected is accurate.
- You will be invited to take part in a voluntary 15 minutes follow-up interview through a phone call or video conferencing to discuss the results of the first interview.

Here are the some of the interview questions:

1. What flexible office schedule(s) and remote workplace policies have you implemented in your organization?
2. What strategies did your leaders of your organization use to implement flexible office schedules and remote workplaces in your organization?
3. How did leaders of your organization develop these implementation strategies?

4. What key challenges did leaders of your organization encounter before and during the implementation of these strategies?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this research is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to participate in this research. No one will treat you differently if you decide not to take part in this research. If you decide to participate, you can change your mind and stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Participating in this Study:

Participation in this study involves some risk of minor discomforts that may be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue and stress. However, participation in this study will not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing. Your participation can assist other organizations with formulating strategies to successfully implement flexible work policies.

Payment:

No payment or other incentives is offered for participating in this research.

Privacy:

Any and all information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purpose outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or any other information that could identify you in the study reports. The collected data will be kept in a safe for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

You can ask any questions you have now, or you may contact the researcher later via email at vida.moradinasab@waldenu.edu If you wish to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call the Research Participant Advocate at my university at 001-612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is IRB will enter approval number here and it expires on IRB will enter expiration data here.

Please print or save this consent form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

If you feel you understand the research well enough to participate, please indicate your consent by replying to this email with the words "I consent".

Appendix B: Letter of Invitation

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Vida Moradinasab and I am completing the requirements for the Doctorate of Business Administration degree at Walden University. This is an invitation to participate in an important research study on strategies for successful implementation of flexible work schedules and remote workplaces policies in the Middle East. Your participation in this research can help formulating useful strategies for successful implementation of flexible work policies in the region. Your participation in this research is voluntary and you may opt at any time. Also, participation in this research is confidential. The organization and individual names, location, positions and personally identifiable information will not be shared.

If you choose to participate, you will be invited to a 1-hour interview through a phone call or video conferencing with Ms. Vida Motadinasab, which will be recoded for accuracy purposes. If you are interested in more information about my study please read the consent form that is included with this email. Please take the necessary time you need to consider this invitation. For any questions or clarifications required, please contact me by phone at +971-50-3835758 or by email at vida.moradinasab@waldenu.edu

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

Vida Moradinasab, DBA Candidate

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

My name is Vida Moradinasab and I am completing the requirements for a Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) at Walden University. I request your assistance with collecting data for my doctoral study. The purpose of this research is to explore strategies for successful implementation of flexible work schedules and remote workplaces policies in the Middle East. Your participation in this research can provide information that would help formulating practical strategies for successful implementation of flexible work policies.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. Participation in this research is confidential; your name, location, position and other personal information that may identify you will not be shared.

Background Information on Interviewee:

Gender:

Living status:

Interview Questions:

1. What flexible office schedule(s) and remote workplace policies have you implemented in your organization?
2. What strategies did your leaders of your organization use to implement flexible office schedules and remote workplaces in your organization?
3. How did leaders of your organization develop these implementation strategies?
4. What key challenges did leaders of your organization encounter before and during the implementation of these strategies?

5. How did leaders of your organization address the key challenges to implementing the successful strategies for flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies?
6. How did you assess the effectiveness of your strategies for flexible office schedules and remote workplace policies in your organization?
7. What additional information would you like to share about the flexible office schedule and remote workplace implementation strategies in your organization?

Thank you for your participation.