

Systematic Analysis of Literature Review Impact of Flexible Work Arrangements and Job Autonomy on Work Performance with Work Engagement as Intervening

Yohanes Wibisono*, Budi Eko Soetjipto, Ludi Wishnu Wardana, Sopiah

Malang State University, Malang, Indonesia

*Corresponding author. Email: Yohanes.Wibisono.2404138@students.um.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The transformation of work systems in the digital era has driven organizations to adopt flexible work designs, such as flexible scheduling and job autonomy, to enhance employee effectiveness. This study systematically reviews the relationship between flexible work arrangements, job autonomy, and work performance, with work engagement as an intervening variable. Using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, this study analyzes 55 Scopus-indexed articles published between 2021 and 2025. The findings indicate that work flexibility positively contributes to performance, mainly when mediated by work engagement, which encompasses motivation, dedication, and absorption. Work engagement is a psychological bridge between modern work structures and performance outcomes. These findings reinforce the integration of the Job Demands-Resources Model, Self-Determination Theory, and Work Engagement Theory while providing practical implications for developing adaptive and human-centred work policies. This study recommends further research using longitudinal approaches, mixed methods, and cross-sector analyses to address the complexities of flexible work in the post-digital era.

Keywords: Flexible Work Arrangements, Job Autonomy, Systematic Literature Review, Work Engagement, Work Performance.

1. INTRODUCTION

The shift from traditional work models toward more flexible and adaptive systems, such as flexible work arrangements (FWA) and job autonomy, has emerged as a key strategy for enhancing effectiveness, efficiency, and employee well-being (Arora & Pratibha, 2022). Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) can both enhance and hinder employee innovation performance, depending on how they are managed and individual employee characteristics (Wang & Xie, 2023). On the other hand, job autonomy strengthens individual control over work methods and processes, fostering responsibility and initiative (Liu et al., 2024).

However, flexible work design does not automatically yield optimal performance without the support of work engagement. Empirical evidence indicates that flexibility without engagement can lead to social isolation and diminished morale (Boccoli et al., 2023; Mudiyansele et al., 2025). Work Engagement mediates modern work design and performance outcomes by enhancing motivation and psychological resilience (Lopes et al., 2025; Mohammad et al., 2025).

Against this backdrop, a systematic review is necessary to analyze the linkages between flexible work arrangements and job autonomy regarding work performance, with work engagement as an intervening variable. This study aims to address the fragmentation in the literature, construct a thematic map, and identify future research trends and directions. Specifically, the study aims to answer three key questions: 1) How do flexible work arrangements and job autonomy influence employee performance?; 2) What is the role of work engagement as an intervening variable in the relationship between work models and performance?; 3) What are prior studies' empirical findings, thematic patterns, and theoretical contributions to this relationship?

This study provides theoretical contributions to advancing human resource management (HRM) science while offering a practical foundation for formulating adaptive, productive, and humanistic work policies in the era of flexible digital work.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to comprehensively examine scholarly literature on the impact of flexible work arrangements and job autonomy on employee performance, mediated through the level of work engagement. The SLR approach was selected because it can systematically synthesize findings while identifying thematic patterns and significant research gaps (Broccoli et al., 2023).

In this study, the PRISMA method was applied to systematically collect data from the Scopus database, focusing on studies published between 2021 and 2025, followed by the application of strict inclusion and exclusion criteria to select relevant and high-quality studies, as shown in Figure 1 below:

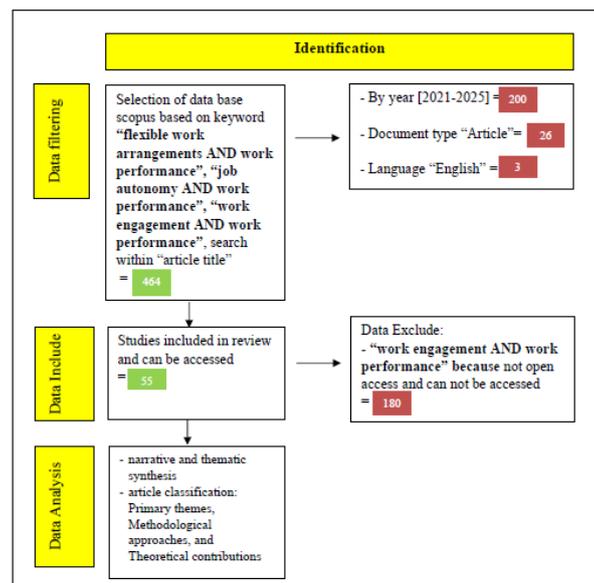


Figure 1 Data Collection Process. Source: Prisma Flow Diagram

Data was then extracted and synthesized, providing a reliable basis for conclusions. This approach ensures the credibility and reproducibility of the review. Literature was gathered from the Scopus database using the following keywords: "flexible work arrangements AND work performance", "job autonomy AND work performance", and "work engagement AND work performance", which were searched within the "article title".

The analysis phase employed narrative and thematic synthesis through in-depth reading. Articles were classified according to Primary themes, Methodological approaches, and Theoretical contributions to construct a holistic conceptual mapping of the relationships between the studied variables.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Theme 1: Flexible Work Arrangements and Work Performance

In the contemporary work landscape, Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) have emerged as an essential managerial strategy for enhancing efficiency, work-life balance, and optimal performance achievement. FWA provide employees with greater control over work schedules, locations, and pace, thereby increasing their capacity to generate productive and sustainable output.

A systematic literature mapping of studies from 2021-2025 identified three key articles that specifically examine the relationship between FWA and work performance. The research conducted by Hariyanto et al. (2024), utilizing a bibliometric approach based on Scopus, reveals that the flexibility in timing and the autonomy in work offered by Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) play a significant role in improving productivity. These flexible work structures allow individuals to synchronize their work patterns with personal preferences, enhancing motivation, satisfaction, and overall performance.

The second study by Wang & Xie (2023) finds that while FWA can lead to increased role ambiguity and lower innovation performance, it can also enhance psychological empowerment, fostering innovation when managed well.

The study concludes that the effects of FWA depend on individual employee characteristics and how these arrangements are implemented, suggesting that organizations tailor FWA to optimize innovation outcomes.

The third study by Arora and Pratibha (2022) demonstrates that flexible work arrangements favour employees' well-being and performance during the COVID-19 pandemic, with managerial support as a crucial facilitator of these positive outcomes. It highlights that such arrangements improve employee satisfaction and productivity, mainly when supported by effective managerial practices.

These studies convey a consistent message: FWA has transcended their role as mere operational facilities to become structural strategies that reinforce modern work performance systems. Variables such as temporal flexibility, work pace autonomy, work-life balance, and telework function as operational mechanisms driving productivity, effectiveness, and output quality. FWA catalyze creating healthy, flexible, and performance-oriented work environments while bridging organizational objectives with employees' personal needs.

Methodologically, these studies predominantly employ quantitative approaches through bibliometrics and systematic reviews, reflecting robust conceptual synthesis efforts. While the number of specific studies remains limited, this methodological tendency indicates a trajectory toward strengthening scientific foundations. Future research should prioritize more in-depth quantitative-empirical investigations, particularly longitudinal approaches, to understand the causal dynamics between FWA and work performance across various industrial contexts.

In conclusion, flexible work arrangements demonstrate significant structural and psychological contributions to work performance. Their effectiveness depends substantially on implementation contexts, technological readiness, organizational policy support, and managerial roles in designing adaptive and sustainable work systems.

3.2. Theme 2: Job Autonomy and Work Performance

Job autonomy has long been recognized as a crucial element in effective work design due to its capacity to foster responsibility, intrinsic motivation, and individual initiative. In an increasingly complex digital work context, autonomy has evolved beyond a psychological need to become a structural instrument that enhances work performance. Current literature mapping demonstrates that job autonomy serves a strategic function in bridging flexible work structures with optimal work performance.

Hasynets et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of job autonomy in digital work environments, where high adaptability and self-reliance are crucial, noting that autonomy fosters resilience, digital initiative, and improved performance. Ulrych (2021) further supports this, indicating that job autonomy serves as a mediating variable between performance feedback and work performance, especially within the millennial workforce, highlighting the need for personalized feedback in autonomous settings. Additionally, Liu et al. (2024) show that enhancing psychological capital and job autonomy in platform companies boosts employee performance and well-being, reinforcing the value of a person-job fit approach in modern work environments.

The collective literature indicates suggestion that job autonomy plays a pivotal role in enhancing employee motivation and perceived control over work, while also acting as a moderating factor for variables such as psychological well-being and work-life balance. Moreover, job autonomy reinforces the connection between flexible work arrangements and performance outcomes, positioning it as a fundamental component of strategically designed, outcome-driven work systems.

3.3. Theme 3: Work Engagement and Work Performance

Work engagement is among the most influential psychological variables driving optimal performance across various organizational contexts. A systematic literature review highlights that engagement significantly strengthens the relationship between organizational structural factors and work performance, directly or as a mediator and moderator.

The study by Mudiyansele et al. (2025) emphasizes the protective function of engagement against burnout, particularly in the healthcare sector, while maintaining performance stability in high-stress situations. Furthermore, Mohammad et al. (2025), through a bibliometric analysis, confirm that engagement is a key driver in the emerging literature on employee performance across various sectors.

Engagement levels also influence organizational innovation. Lopes et al. (2025) demonstrate that engagement enhances an organization's innovative capacity. From a positive psychology perspective, Tang et al. (2024) argue that engagement reflects a healthy and adaptive psychological state, reinforcing employee resilience in organizational dynamics.

Spiritual and cultural values also shape work engagement. Studies by Munjal and Sachdeva (2024) find that engagement is an intermediary between workplace spirituality and performance. From a leadership perspective, engagement is a crucial link between leadership styles and job performance. The study by Abiddin (2024) concludes that transformational leadership significantly enhances employee performance and competency in higher education institutions by fostering creativity, engagement, and alignment with organizational values. In the healthcare sector, Alqahtani and Alshagrawi (2025) show that engagement reduces turnover intentions while improving performance.

Digital organizational transformation also requires a high level of engagement. Mansour and Mohanna (2024) assert that engagement plays a central role in maintaining performance during the adoption of digital technology and in supporting work effectiveness within the digital ecosystem.

Methodologically, the reviewed literature includes systematic reviews (Tang et al., 2024), bibliometric analyses (Mohammad et al., 2025; Munjal & Sachdeva, 2024), and mixed methods (Lee et al., 2024; Lopes et al., 2025). This methodological diversity strengthens the multidisciplinary validity of engagement as a determinant of performance across sectors. The convergence of findings across these varied approaches lends substantial validity to engagement's critical role in organizational success.

This review concludes that work engagement is a strategic performance optimization mechanism. It is a psychological bridge between organizational structure and work outcomes, a buffer against work-related stress, and a motivator for job satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, strengthening engagement should be a top priority in modern HRM strategies, particularly within digital and flexible work environments.

A systematic literature review indicates that flexible work arrangements (FWA), job autonomy, work engagement, and job performance form an interconnected knowledge structure. Through co-occurrence keyword mapping, three main clusters are identified:

1. Flexible work arrangements – Work-life balance – Employee performance (Arora & Pratibha, 2022; Hariyanto et al., 2024; Wang & Xie, 2023)
2. Job autonomy – Psychological well-being – Performance (Hasynets et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2024; Ulrych, 2021)
3. Work engagement – Leadership – Employee outcomes (Abiddin, 2024; Lee et al., 2024; Medhn Desta & Mulie, 2024; Santosa et al., 2023)

Determination Theory identifies work engagement as a central mediating variable between psychological capital and job performance, with job autonomy as a critical moderator (Liu et al., 2024). Complementarily, Work Engagement Theory positions employee engagement as a pivotal link between job design and performance outcomes (Jose & Kushwaha, 2024; Lopes et al., 2025; Tang et al., 2024). The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model remains a dominant explanatory framework, categorizing flexible work arrangements (FWA) and job autonomy as essential job resources that stimulate engagement and enhance performance (Alqahtani & Alshagrawi, 2025; Mohammad et al., 2025; Munjal & Sachdeva, 2024).

This synthesis offers an integrative conceptual model in which structural elements such as FWA, job autonomy, and psychological dimensions, mainly work engagement-jointly influence job performance. Work Engagement is a primary mechanism that activates the performance potential embedded in job design. In contrast, leadership, digital work culture, and adaptive HRM practices shape the effectiveness of these flexible systems.

4. CONCLUSION

The key findings of this study confirm that Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) contribute to work effectiveness by improving work-life balance and enabling adaptive work rhythm management. Job autonomy has been shown to strengthen motivation, accountability, and individual productivity, while work engagement operates as a psychological conduit that links the structure of job design with performance outcomes.

Based on these findings, three central answers to the research questions emerge. First, the FWA and job autonomy synergistically complement each other in enhancing performance. Second, work engagement is a crucial mediating element that fosters dedication, energy, and work absorption. Third, empirical evidence highlights the significance of psychological and contextual variables, such as leadership and digital infrastructure, with theoretical contributions rooted in integrating Job Design Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model.

This study's limitations include the dominance of a cross-sectional approach, limited representation from the informal sector and developing countries, and the lack of cross-generational and workplace culture exploration, which present methodological challenges that require attention. Future research should adopt longitudinal approaches, mixed-

methods studies, cross-sector and cross-country comparative analyses, and the development of new theoretical frameworks, such as human-centred design and digital work theory. Additionally, strengthening multidimensional measurement instruments for engagement, performance, and job autonomy is essential to ensure the validity and practical applicability of the findings.

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