

SUPERVISOR AND COWORKER BARRIERS TO EMPLOYEES' USE OF  
FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTENDED LEAVES OF ABSENCE  
IN CONSULTING FIRMS

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Work-life balance includes options for the employee to complete work away from the office, provide for child care, and attend to personal needs. The benefits of these options include employee retention, productivity, job satisfaction, and engagement, among others. However, for organizations to realize these benefits, employees must use the options available to them. Little research has focused on what barriers exist to employees' use of work-life balance policies, and no studies have explored the barriers as they exist in consulting firms, notorious for poor work-life balance. This study does just that, and its ultimate goal is to provide insight to consulting firms where they can support employees in their efforts to make use of work-life balance options. Results indicate that supervisor support can help employees use flexible work arrangements and extended leaves of absence, and that supervisor and coworker support will influence an employee's use of extended leaves of absence.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### Why Is Work-Life Balance Important?

Each year, Fortune magazine compiles its list of the *100 Best Companies to Work For*, which catalogues those companies that make work-life balance a priority. They formally offer benefits that provide for time away from work and informally establish a corporate culture supportive of a balance between an employee's work and non-work life (Rohman, 2014). These benefits are highly valued by employees, as is a culture that supports their work and personal goals. In return, employer-of-choice companies are able to hire and retain the best talent in their industries.

At the top of this year's list is Google, famous for its perks such as free breakfast, a hair salon, and free car rentals for running errands. Perks like these that permit employees to balance personal obligations with work demands keep employees satisfied (Levering & Moskowitz, 2014). The second company on the list, SAS (Statistical Analysis Systems), offers excellent childcare benefits like on-site daycare and the freedom to work from home when needed, as well as unlimited paid sick days and unpaid sabbaticals. SAS's flexibility stems from senior leadership, who ensures the culture of the organization is supportive of family needs in addition to work requirements.

Third on the list is Boston Consulting Group (BCG), who reportedly spent \$14 million recently on work-life balance programs – an indication to employees that the organization values and encourages work-life balance. BCG's placement at third on *Fortune's 100 best companies to work for* list is a rather surprising result, as just four consulting firms, notorious for long hours and lack of balance between work and life, made the list. The focus of this study is just that: work-life balance in consulting firms.

Most companies offer work-life balance perks and benefits with the hope and expectation that the perks will contribute to achieving the ideal: leading in the marketplace and employing happy, productive workers. However, simply offering a benefit does not mean that an employee will make use of it, and this study seeks to examine some potential barriers to use of work-life balance programs in consulting firms.

### **What Work-Life Balance Programs Exist?**

Providing nap pods and three meals per day are rather extreme innovations for targeting work-life balance; far more common and more formalized work-life balance policies are offered by many organizations. As the percentage of women in the workforce grew, so did the need for a third party to handle childcare (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999). Companies reacted by offering on-site or nearby childcare provisions to help parents return to and remain in the workforce following the births of children. Other frequently cited programs include flexible work hours and telecommuting (Darcy, McCarthy, Hill, & Grady, 2012; Konrad & Mangel, 2000; Smith, 2013). Flexible work hours typically require employees to be present during a company's core business hours, but permit them to use the non-core hours as they need for non-work activities, as long as the week's worth of expected hours worked are met. With telecommuting, some companies provide for employees to work from home or elsewhere on a regular basis, even providing them with the equipment they need to do so such as laptops and printers.

Less utilized strategies for work-life balance include annualized hours, compressed hours, job sharing, phased retirement, career breaks, and wellness plans (Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, & Neuman, 1999; Grobler & de Bruyn, 2011; U.S. Office of Personnel Management, n.d.). With annualized hours, employees can work the

expected number of annual hours at any time during the year. Compressed hours are similar, where employees work 40 hours in a week over a period of less than 5 days. Phased retirement permits an employee to gradually leave the workforce and to ease into a life with less income and more free time. Career breaks allow employees to take unpaid leave (typically) for a number of months without affecting the chances of future promotions and rewards (if implemented correctly).

Wellness plans, often listed under an organization's work-life balance policy offerings, serve two primary purposes: increase the health of the employees and decrease the employer's health care costs as a result (U.S. Department of Labor, 2012). Some additional options for less formal work-life balance policies include casual dress Fridays, personal space and/or private phone rooms, no meetings between 8 and 9am, social events at work, on-site dry cleaning, taxi vouchers for late nights, and providing dinner for unplanned overtime (Government of Alberta, 2004). Companies have grown creative to fulfill an employee need for work-life balance.

### **How Does Work-Life Balance Benefit Both Organizations and Employees?**

Much research has been conducted on the benefits of having formalized work-life balance policies for both the organization and the employees. Organizations experience improved employee retention, increased employee productivity, engaged employees, and organizationally committed employees. Employees experience better job satisfaction, improved motivation, and reduced stress. These benefits ultimately lead to positive financial performance, as discussed below.

**Work-life balance and retention.** One of the more well-researched outcomes of having work-life balance programs is employee retention. Voluntary turnover can present a significant, but perhaps overlooked, cost to organizations. In a 2009 case study of a global media company whose average voluntary turnover rate was 22%, ROI Institute founder Jack Phillips calculated the average turnover cost per employee as \$117,000 (Phillips, Edwards, & Lounsberry, 2009). This equated to a total cost of \$28.3M, or 11% of the company's net worth. Moreover, his estimates for turnover costs as a percent of salary range from 30% for entry level employees to 200% for middle managers, and even up to 400% for specialist positions! Luckily, work-life balance policies contribute to employees' reasons to stay at a company and help reduce such costly turnover (Maxwell, Rankine, Bell, & MacVicar, 2007; Richman, Civian, Shannon, Hill, & Brennan, 2008). Global consulting firm Accenture, the majority of whose employees travel each week, reviewed its own employees' commitment to the firm and found that 83% cite work-life balance as a main contributor of their intention to leave (Klun, 2008). As a result, they have included a new policy that permits employees to take unpaid leave of up to three months without harming their current jobs or future career potential.

Some studies have explored alternative relationships between work-life balance and retention. Work-life balance policies were shown to mediate the relationship between job stressors that cause employees to quit, such as role overload, and the likelihood that employees will stay at the company (Jacob, Bond, Galinsky, & Hill, 2008; Zhao & Rashid, 2010). Even just the perception of flexibility has been shown to improve employee retention rates (Richman, Civian, Shannon, Hill, & Brennan, 2008). While studying the impact of organizational climate and mentoring on female IT workers'

retention, work-life balance arose as a third contributing factor for Trauth, Quesenberry, and Huang (2009). Their study also showed that work-life balance expressed itself in many different forms such as family care, emotional and time resources, and flexibility of scheduling.

**Work-life balance and productivity.** Work-life balance policies improve not only retention of high quality talent, thereby reducing the cost of turnover, they also improve employee productivity (Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, & Neuman, 1999; Grobler & de Bruyn, 2011; Maxwell, Rankine, Bell, & MacVicar, 2007). Rainey and Wolf (1981) explored the organizational effects of flexible working hours in a controlled field experiment in a bureau of the U.S. Social Security Administration. Flex-time policies that mandated core hours between 9:30 am and 3:00pm, but allowed flexible hours before and after core hours, resulted in an increase in the quantity of worker output (number of processed Social Security payments).

The influence of work-life balance policies on productivity, however, may depend on worker characteristics. Specifically, “firms employing higher percentages of professionals and higher percentages of women showed a stronger relationship between the provision of extensive work-life benefits and productivity.” (Konrad & Mangel, 2000, p. 1235). The implications of Konrad and Mangel’s research suggest that certain work-life balance policies will benefit some organizations but not all.

**Work-life balance and job satisfaction.** Job satisfaction has been shown to affect employees’ performance of specific tasks on the job, as well as in exhibiting contextual behaviors such as assisting fellow employees and improving workplace morale (Harrison, Newman, & Roth, 2006). While seemingly obvious, it is worth noting

that much research in the last 30 years shows that work-life balance remains a major contributing factor to job satisfaction (Grobler & de Bruyn, 2011; Jacob, Bond, Galinsky, & Hill, 2008; Nelson, 2013; Rainey & Wolf, 1981; Scandura & Lankau, 1997). It can also serve as a mediator, or the mechanism, through which organizational support leads to job satisfaction (Wu, Rusyidi, Claiborne, & McCarthy, 2013). The research that Rainey and Wolf (1981) conducted with the U.S. Social Security Administration, in addition to finding improved production, discovered an improvement in expressed satisfaction with the jobs and the working conditions resulting from providing flexible hours.

**Work-life balance and engagement.** The concept of engagement, which is more than just worker happiness, has become a recent focus of many organizations (Macey & Schneider, 2008). An engaged workforce implies an energized workforce that is passionate about the organization's goals and dedicates each day to making progress toward those goals (Macey & Schneider, 2008). These researchers posit that an engaged workforce may serve as an essential competitive advantage in today's economy. Work-life balance has been shown to have direct impact on employee engagement through perceived flexibility in an employee's work schedule and the ability to manage both personal and work commitments (Jacob, Bond, Galinsky, & Hill, 2008; Richman, Civian, Shannon, Hill, & Brennan, 2008).

**Work-life balance and other benefits.** As demonstrated above, there has been much research on the benefits of work-life balance policies. Some additional benefits include increased employee motivation (Barney & Elias, 2010; Maxwell, Rankine, Bell, & MacVicar, 2007), reduced stress (Barney & Elias, 2010; Zhao & Rashid, 2010),

improved mental health (Jacob, Bond, Galinsky, & Hill, 2008; Maxwell, Rankine, Bell, & MacVicar, 2007), and greater organizational commitment (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003; Maxwell, Rankine, Bell, & MacVicar, 2007; Scandura & Lankau, 1997). Work-life balance policies that permit employees to have more control over their own schedules were shown to motivate employees both intrinsically and extrinsically (Barney & Elias, 2010). The same study found a reduction in job stress as a result of schedule control. Flexibility in scheduling was also associated with better mental health (Jacob, Bond, Galinsky, & Hill, 2008; Maxwell, Rankine, Bell, & MacVicar, 2007). Lastly, simply the existence of flexible work hour programs, not even utilization, was found to be related to organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Scandura & Lankau, 1997).

### **What Are the Disadvantages of Maintaining Work-Life Balance Programs?**

No discussion of work-life balance is complete without mention of some potential downsides to maintaining work-life balance policies. While these kinds of policies offer reduction in turnover costs, improved productivity, and overall better employee attitudes such as job satisfaction and engagement, they can also present administrative burdens. In addition, flextime policies may limit the potential for career growth if employees utilize the policies. Furthermore, where work-life balance policies are generally intended to promote separation of work and non-work lives, the opposite effect may result. An example of this is providing laptops to enable employees to work from home, but then expecting that employees will respond to email at all hours.

Some administrative burdens include maintaining robust performance evaluation systems that can accommodate supervisor and peer reviews of workers who work remotely or at varying hours (Hill, Ferris, & Martinson, 2003). If an organization offers

job sharing, it must also offer training for two part-time employees who are performing the work of just one full-time employee (Grobler & de Bruyn, 2011). Flexible work practices can create challenges in fostering effective two-way communication, particularly in team-based environments (Grobler & de Bruyn, 2011). Hill, Ferris, and Martinson (2003) also cited the potential for employees on flexible or telecommuting schedules to overstep the boundary between work time and family time, thus countering the intended effect of the work-life balance policy. This phenomenon was noted by Trauth, Quesenberry, and Huang (2009) in their study of female IT workers' retention.

The existence of work-life balance policies implies a psychological contract between the employer and employee that indicates that the employer respects and intends to avoid permeating the non-work life of its employees (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). As employees seek ways to balance their personal and working lives through flexible time and even reduced working hour schedules, organizations are pressing for more productivity and higher work volumes from each employee (Hagel, 2013), which can lead to violation of the psychological contracts. As employees work reduced hours but still face workloads equal to those of full-time employees, the psychological contract violations may *increase* intent to terminate rather than reduce it (Barnett, Gordon, Gareis, & Morgan, 2004; Turnley & Feldman, 2000).

Telecommuting is a popular, but often underutilized, offering in formal work-life balance policies. The results of the BLS 2012 American Time Use Survey indicate that 23% of workers worked at home for an average of three hours on a typical day. Telecommuting permits employers to cut down on office space costs, helps reduce environmental impacts through less traffic, and appears to allow for multitasking of child



care and work productivity (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). These researchers also found that telecommuting improved the employee-supervisor relationship, increased job satisfaction, lowered job stress, and lowered turnover intent. However, other research lists a bevy of unintended consequences of telecommuting for both the telecommuter and non-telecommuter, as viewed from an organizational justice perspective (Thatcher & Bagger, 2011). Telecommuters felt they had limited access to information and may have missed out on work opportunities and rewards as a result of their physical absence from the workplace and their manager's physical view. Non-telecommuters expended extra effort to inform the telecommuters of happenings in the workplace, and may have resented the telecommuters who appeared to have more freedom and perks. Furthermore, in a study of US labor statistics over time, Noonan and Glass (2012) found that telecommuters "were more likely to work overtime" (p. 40), thus impeding work-life balance. This research study indicated that the number of organizations offering flexible work schedules, including telecommuting, has increased since the mid-1990s but that usage has remained relatively flat.

### **What Factors Affect the Use of Work-Life Balance Policies?**

While the disadvantages are not miniscule, the advantages of work-life balance programs do outweigh the drawbacks. For organizations to achieve higher retention, better productivity, job satisfaction, engagement, and other benefits as expected from investing in and offering work-life balance programs, employees must choose to make use of such programs. In the long run, perceived flexibility will likely give way to actual flexibility needed for employees to remain committed to an organization. In recent years,

some studies have explored a few key organizational elements that can serve as enablers and barriers in the use of work-life balance policy programs.

**Organizational culture and work-life balance.** Ravisi and Schultz (2006) define organizational culture as a "set of shared mental assumptions that guide interpretation and action in organizations by defining appropriate behavior for various situations" (p. 437). Various studies have found that organizational culture is a major contributing factor to employees' use of work-life balance policies: the more supportive the culture, the more likely employees will use work-life balance options (Parkes & Langford, 2008; Turner, Lingard, & Francis, 2009). Parkes and Langford (2008) suggested that "organizations may be able to successfully market themselves as 'employers of choice' by offering cultures supportive of work-life balance" (p. 281).

Senior leadership in organizations is one of the primary designers of the culture within an organization, which is then fostered and cultivated by the employees within the organization (Jex & Britt, 2008). As such, senior leadership, through its direct influence on organizational culture, may indirectly affect the utilization of work-life balance programs. While researching impediments to use of work-life balance programs, Lauzun, Morganson, Major, and Green (2010) state that "the organizational environment which is the context for behavior bears simultaneous consideration" (p. 196) in addition to management opinion.

Another aspect of organizational culture is an organization's history. Lester (2013) studied higher-education facilities and found that a history of undergoing major change, such as admitting women to the university in the 1970s, allowed for an easier

transition when implementing a new work-life balance policy, at least with regard to its garnering acceptance from the university employee population.

**Supervisor support and work-life balance.** Part of an organization's culture includes supervisory attitudes. Unsurprisingly, immediate supervisor support has been shown to affect how much employees make use of work-life balance programs (Darcy, McCarthy, Hill, & Grady, 2012; Kossek, Baltes, & Matthews, 2011; Lauzun, Morganson, Major, & Green, 2010; Parkes & Langford, 2008). An Australian study by Colley (2010) surveyed employees who specifically commented that the attitude of management contributes to their work life balance, citing an 'ask and you shall receive' mentality. Other employees surveyed for this same study, however, believe that supervisor attitudes are the cause of their inability to make use of the organization's work-life balance policies.

A few studies have clarified that supervisor attitudes are often a result of other organizational barriers (Dick & Hyde, 2006; Lauzun, Morganson, Major, & Green, 2010). The study of one Fortune 500 company by Lauzun, Morganson, Major, and Green (2010) found that supervisors granted fewer than half of flexible working hour requests, and the reasons cited include a lack of authority in accommodating the requests. Job requirements such as required working hours also prevented accommodations. Relatedly, a study on childcare workers found that supervisor support did not enhance work-life balance due to employees' beliefs that immediate supervisors lacked power to provide support (Wu, Rusyidi, Claiborne, & McCarthy, 2013). Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, and Shockley (2013) suggest further research in supervisor trainings on being supportive of employees' non-work lives. Training alone, however, will not enable supervisors to

demonstrate support of employee requests to utilize work-life balance policies if there are other organizational barriers.

**Coworker support and work-life balance.** A particular facet of organizational culture is the stigma associated with taking advantage of work-life balance programs that often prevents their use (Lester, 2013; Rudman & Mescher, 2013). Rudman and Mescher (2013) found that men who employ paternity leave were viewed negatively by other employees. They appeared to lack organizational commitment and were assumed to be undeserving of rewards, preventing men from using their benefits. Williams, Blair-Loy, and Berdahl's (2013) research found that employees imposed stigmas upon themselves on the use of flexible work benefits. These stigmas stemmed from their own cultural values of hard work and personal responsibility, rather than from fears of how they would be viewed and loss of rewards and promotion. At a focus group conducted by Turner, Lingard, and Francis (2009) in an Australian construction company, a subject described the "walk of shame" (p. 100) when leaving work early, leading these researchers to conclude that organizational culture significantly impacts employees' work-life balance through coworker opinion, at least in the construction industry. Furthermore, work-life balance is often seen as promoting the well-being of women only, and in particular, mothers (Lester, 2013; Southworth, 2014; Wu, Rusyidi, Claiborne, & McCarthy, 2013).

### **How Do These Factors Affect Employees' Work-Life Balance in Consulting Firms?**

Overall, simply having a handbook that offers work-life balance programs does not guarantee outcomes like reduced turnover, improved productivity, and engaged, motivated employees. Rather, employees must choose to use work-life balance options, a choice that often depends on the supportiveness of the organizational culture. The

consulting industry is a place where utilization of work-life balance policies is notoriously lacking. Employees at consulting firms are typically white-collar, salaried employees who are expected to work long hours and to be available for all client needs at any particular time of day and time of year. Similar to law firms and investment banks, this is the nature of the work, and it is not likely to change (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook, n.d.).

Two of the underutilized options for work-life balance often found in consulting firms are flexible work arrangements and extended leave policies. Flexible work arrangements permit employees to work hours, days, and/or months that deviate from businesses' core operating schedules for a variety of reasons, including personal and family obligations, operating costs (such as office overhead), and even traffic patterns. Employees may also choose to work from locations other than the office, such as at home. Extended leave policies permit employees to be absent from work, with or without pay, without threat to job security, again for many different reasons including family responsibilities, personal growth, and volunteer and recreational activities. This study will focus on how supervisors and coworkers at consulting firms affect an employee's actual use of flexible work arrangements and extended leave policies, and hypothesizes the following:

***Hypothesis 1a:*** Actual use of flexible work arrangements in consulting firms is positively related to supervisor support.

***Hypothesis 1b:*** Actual use of flexible work arrangements in consulting firms is positively related to coworker support.

***Hypothesis 2a:*** Actual use of extended leaves of absence in consulting firms is positively related to supervisor support.

***Hypothesis 2b:*** Actual use of extended leaves of absence in consulting firms is positively related to coworker support.

***Hypothesis 3a:*** The relationship between desire to use and actual use of flexible work arrangements is moderated by supervisor support.

***Hypothesis 3b:*** The relationship between desire to use and actual use of flexible work arrangements is moderated by coworker support.

***Hypothesis 4a:*** The relationship between desire to use and actual use of extended leaves of absence is moderated by supervisor support.

***Hypothesis 4b:*** The relationship between desire to use and actual use of extended leaves of absence is moderated by coworker support.

## CHAPTER II: METHOD

### Participants

The survey population targeted those employees who currently work for or recently worked for consulting firms. Participants were solicited from the personal and professional contacts of the principal investigator. A snowball method was used to solicit participation by asking the contacts to not only participate but also to ask their colleagues to participate. In addition, participants were solicited via an online professional network (LinkedIn) and an online social media platform (Facebook). Alumni of the Middle Tennessee State University Industrial/Organizational Psychology program were also contacted. Lastly, participants were solicited from fellow attendees and members of professional organizations and conferences (Society for Industrial/Organizational Psychologists annual conference, Middle Tennessee Society for Human Resource Management, Nashville Chapter Association for Talent Development).

The resulting sample size for hypotheses 1a, 1b, 3a, and 3b was 97 participants, which resulted in a power of .87, based on an effect size of .30 and an alpha of .05. The resulting sample size for hypotheses 2a, 2b, 4a, and 4b was 90 participants, which resulted in a power of .84, based on an effect size of .30 and an alpha of .05. The total sample size was 103 participants, as most participants provided opinions on all hypotheses covering both flexible work arrangements and extended leaves of absence. Numerous demographic variables were captured from the participants. Appendix A displays counts for each demographic variable. All types of consulting personnel were targeted for the sample, including those holding administrative assistant and office support positions, analysts, consultants, and those in leadership positions, and the

resulting sample was widely distributed across positions. The sample was 51% male. Ages varied, with a slight concentration of people in their thirties (40%). The vast majority do not travel for work (79%), with just 7% travelling more than 40% of the time. Almost all are salaried (94%), half have dependents living in the home (50%), and 95% are full-time employees.

Within the sample, 48% have between 11 and 20 days of vacation, whereas 35% have more than 20 days. Forty-four percent of participants are not provided with sick time that is separate from vacation time, which comprises 58% of those who have more than 20 days of vacation. Twenty-five percent have fewer than five days of sick time. Lastly, participants were asked to first indicate the employee headcount for their entire organization and then the employee headcount in their current location, as these items may differ for those who work for larger firms with multiple office locations. Fifty-one percent of participants work for firms with more than 500 employees, and the next largest group, 21%, work for firms with 25 or fewer employees. However, 45% have 25 or fewer employees in their current location and 34% have between 100 and 500.

If a participant failed to provide any data for one or more of the variables within a hypothesis, his record was excluded from analysis of that hypothesis. If a participant failed to provide responses on one or two of the items within a section of the survey that measures a single variable, his record was maintained and an average response was assumed for the missing item response.



## Procedures

A brief message describing the purpose of the study (see Appendix B) accompanied the link to an on-line survey (see Appendix C). This comprehensive questionnaire measured each of the variables included in this study. The variables are:

- Desire to use flexible work arrangements;
- Actual use of flexible work arrangements;
- Desire to use extended leaves of absence;
- Actual use of extended leaves of absence;
- Supervisor support for flexible work arrangements;
- Coworker support for flexible work arrangements
- Supervisor support for extended leaves of absence;
- Supervisor support for extended leaves of absence; and
- Fear of limited future career opportunities

This survey was available online for ease of distribution and faster response rates.

Participants were contacted via email or on a social networking site with a link to the online survey. Participants were asked to consent that they are at least 18 years or older. Participants were asked to confirm that they currently work for a consulting firm or have worked for one in the last five years and that they had flexible work arrangements and/or extended leaves of absence available to them in their consulting firms. Participation was voluntary with no monetary incentives. Participants were permitted to return to previous pages within the survey, as well as stop and start again at a later date. Manipulation checks were added into the survey to confirm that the responses should be considered in the completed data sample. Such checks included:

- Screening out responders who spent under three minutes on the survey; and
- To check for attentiveness, including one quality assurance question asking participants to confirm the current year, and two quality assurance questions

with wording stating “Please indicate ‘strongly agree’ for this item” and “Please indicate ‘disagree’ for this item.”

No participants spent less than three minutes on the survey. Eleven respondents provided incorrect responses to any one of the three quality assurance questions. For conservatism, these eleven respondents were excluded from analyses. The counts reported above do not include these eleven excluded respondents.

The survey first asked participants to indicate if they currently work at, or have worked at in the last five years, a consulting firm. If the participants responded “No” to both of these questions, their data was not included in the sample. Then, the survey asked participants to indicate if their organizations permit use of flexible working arrangements and use of extended leaves of absence. If participants responded “No” to both of these questions, then their records were not included in the sample. If participants responded “No” to either question but not both, indicating that the participants have either a flexible working arrangement or extended leave of absence policy available to them, then the survey used branching logic to eliminate the questions pertaining to the variable that is not applicable to those participants.

The survey then questioned the respondents with regard to desired use and actual use of flexible work arrangements and extended leaves of absence. Following these questions were statements relating to perceived supervisor support and coworker support for use of flexible work arrangements and extended leaves of absence. Statements relating to fear of limited future career opportunities followed the statements relating to support. An opportunity for the respondent to provide any further comments followed. The survey concluded with optional demographic questions.

## Measures

The items on the survey were developed by the researcher for the purposes of this study. While other scales were considered, the language of the items from these other scales in the literature was considered too broad to reliably test the hypotheses describe for this study. For all variables on the survey, reliability coefficient alphas were generated to test the reliability of all items for each construct. Appendix C presents a copy of the survey instrument.

**Desire to use flexible work arrangements** (Appendix C, items 6-9). Flexible work arrangements are defined as employee work schedules that are different than the organization's standard operating schedule. The typical consulting firm operating schedule is between 8am and 5pm, Monday through Friday. Employees' schedules may deviate from this typical schedule for a variety of reasons and in any manner, like varied work hours and/or different days worked, as well as the location in which work is performed. For example, if a company's standard operating hours are from 8am to 5pm, a flexible work arrangement in the hours worked could mean that an employee works from 6am until 3pm. An example of flexibility in the weekly schedule is working 10 hours per day, Monday through Thursday, and not working on Friday. Employees may choose to work during standard operating hours, but at home or elsewhere that is better suited to their current circumstances.

Given that employees' actual use of flexible work arrangements are likely first influenced by their desire to make use of such arrangements (and then perhaps by supervisor and/or coworker support), this survey included four items that averaged to

form the desire variable which served as a covariate in the analyses. These items were as follows:

- How often would you want to work flexible hours?
- How often would you want to adjust the days of the week that you work?
- How often would you want to work from a location other than the office?
- In general, how often would you want to use a flexible working arrangement?

The 5-point Likert response scale ranged from “fewer than 5 times per year” to “every day.”

**Actual use of flexible work arrangements** (Appendix C, items 10-13). The questionnaire included four items to be averaged to represent the actual use of flexible work arrangements. Items about an employee’s actual use of flexible work arrangements were:

- How often do you work flexible hours?
- How often do you adjust the days of the week that you work?
- How often do you work from a location other than the office?
- In general, how often do you use a flexible working arrangement?

The response scale for each of these questions was a 5-point Likert scale and ranged from “hardly ever or never” to “any time I want to.”

**Desire to use extended leaves of absence** (Appendix C, items 14-17). Extended leaves of absence are defined as periods of absence from work during which the employee does not perform any work, and typically does not receive pay, but has job security upon returning to work. These policies are seen as contributing to work-life balance by permitting employees to apply consistent and focused time to an aspect of their personal lives (Klun, 2008). Similar to the flexible working arrangements, employees may choose to be absent for an extended period of time for any reason, such as family care or simply vacation time. This study reviewed the choice, rather than need,

of taking extended leaves of absences. Examples of extended leaves of absence include taking vacations that are longer than two weeks, utilizing the benefits provided by the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) (typically up to 12 weeks of unpaid time off) for family care, and working for volunteer organizations such as the Peace Corps which requires concentrated time away from the office.

Similarly to flexible working arrangements, employees' actual use of extended leaves of absence is driven first by their desire to take a leave. This survey included four items that averaged to form the desire variable, which served as a covariate in the analyses. These items were as follows:

- How often would you want to take an extended leave of absence for vacation use?
- How often would you want to take an extended leave of absence for family care?
- How often would you want to take an extended leave of absence for volunteering?
- How often would you want to take an extended leave of absence for any other reason?

The 5-point Likert response scale for each item ranged from “0-1 times in my career” to “every year.”

**Actual use of extended leaves of absence** (Appendix C, items 18-21). The questionnaire included four items, the average response of which represented the actual use of extended leaves of absence variable. Items about an employee's actual use of extended leaves of absence were as follows:

- How often do you take an extended leave of absence for vacation use?
- How often do you take an extended leave of absence for personal or family care?
- How often do you take an extended leave of absence for volunteering?
- How often do you take an extended leave of absence for any other reason?

The response scale for each of these questions was a 5-point Likert scale and ranged from “hardly ever or never” to “any time I want to.”

**Supervisor support for flexible work arrangements** (Appendix C, items 23-33). Supervisor support for flexible work arrangements was a quantitative variable scaled using a 5-point Likert scale for all items, coded with 1 representing Strongly Disagree and 5 representing Strongly Agree. There were eleven items that asked about supervisor support and how it pertains to flexible work arrangements.

**Supervisor support for extended leaves of absence** (Appendix C, items 34-41). Similar to the supervisor support for flexible work arrangements variable, supervisor support for extended leaves of absence was a quantitative variable scaled using a 5-point Likert scale for all items, coded with 1 representing Strongly Disagree and 5 representing Strongly Agree. There were eight items that represented this variable.

**Coworker support for flexible work arrangements** (Appendix C, items 43-50, 52-54). Like supervisor support, coworker support for flexible work arrangements was a quantitative variable scaled using the same 5-point Likert scale as for supervisor support variables. There were eleven items that asked about coworker support and how it pertains to flexible work arrangements.

**Coworker support for extended leaves of absence** (Appendix C, items 55-62). Similar to coworker support for flexible work arrangements, this quantitative variable was scaled using the same 5-point Likert scale. There were eight items that related coworker support to extended leaves of absence.

Each item asked the participants to identify how well they agreed with the statement, based on how supportive they feel their supervisors and coworkers are. For all of the above listed support variables, one item within each grouping was reverse coded.

**Additional survey items** (Appendix C, items 63-79). Some additional items were added to the survey instrument in order to conduct follow-up analyses. A variable for fear of limited future career opportunities (Appendix C, items 63-66) included four items that were scaled using the same 5-point Likert scale as support variables. Demographic questions were posed at the end of the survey (Appendix C, items 68-79) and included job role, gender, age, time spent travelling for work, salaried or hourly status, dependents living in the home, number of vacation days, number of sick days, full-time or part-time status, number of hours worked per week if part-time, number of full-time employees in the entire organization, and number of full-time employees in the respondent's current location.

## CHAPTER III: RESULTS

### Preliminary Analyses

Reliability analyses were performed to confirm whether any of the survey items that comprise each variable should be excluded from that variable. Cronbach's alpha ranged from .74 to .85 for the eight main variables (Actual Use of Flexible Work Arrangements, Desire to Use Flexible Work Arrangements, Actual Use of Extended Leaves of Absence, Desire to Use Extended Leaves of Absence, Supervisor Support for Flexible Work Arrangements, Coworker Support for Flexible Work Arrangements, Supervisor Support for Extended Leaves of Absence, Coworker Support for Extended Leaves of Absence). For each variable, the "Cronbach's alpha if the item was removed" were reviewed; no items were removed as a result of this analysis. The results of the reliability analyses can be found in Appendix D. Items were scored on a 1 to 5 scale. Items within each variable were averaged to create each variable. Bivariate correlations were run between variables, the results of which are presented in Table 1 below.



Table 1

*Correlation Matrix of Hypotheses Variables*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Desire to use flexible work arrangements	—						
2. Actual use of flexible work arrangements	.39**	—					
3. Desire to use extended leaves of absence	.24*	.00	—				
4. Actual use of extended leaves of absence	.16	.18	.43**	—			
5. Supervisor support for flexible work arrangements	.09	.43**	-.16	.10	—		
6. Coworker support for flexible work arrangements	.18	.20*	.03	.12	.31**	—	
7. Supervisor support for extended leaves of absence	-.04	.34**	-.03	.29**	.69**	.28**	—
8. Coworker support for extended leaves of absence	-.07	.17	.11	.22*	.31**	.65**	.45**

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$

Descriptive statistics for the hypotheses variables are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics for Hypotheses Variables*

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Desire to use flexible work arrangements	98	3.43 (.88)
Actual use of flexible work arrangements	98	3.11 (1.13)
Desire to use extended leaves of absence	92	2.21 (.92)
Actual use of extended leaves of absence	91	1.37 (.72)
Supervisor support for flexible work arrangements	98	3.97 (.60)
Coworker support for flexible work arrangements	98	3.72 (.59)
Supervisor support for extended leaves of absence	91	3.42 (.72)
Coworker support for extended leaves of absence	91	3.43 (.66)

### **Main Analyses**

A series of hierarchical multiple linear regression analyses ( $\alpha = .05$ ) were performed to test all hypotheses. In the first step of a hierarchical regression, Desire to Use Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) was input as a predictor of Actual Use of FWA. Desire to Use FWA accounts for 14% of the variance in Actual Use of FWA, as shown in Model 1 of Table 3 below. While controlling for Desire to Use FWA, Actual Use of FWA in consulting firms is positively related to Supervisor Support for FWA and contributes an additional 15% in the explanation of variance, which supports Hypothesis 1a. Model 2 of Table 3 below shows the results of the hierarchical regression for predicting Actual Use of FWA from Supervisor Support for FWA.

Table 3

*Model Summary for Predicting Actual Use of FWA from Supervisor Support for FWA*

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of Est.	Change Statistics				
					R <sup>2</sup> Δ	FΔ	df <sub>1</sub>	df <sub>2</sub>	Sig. FΔ
1	.39 <sup>a</sup>	.15	.14	1.04	.15	17.13	1	96	.000
2	.55 <sup>b</sup>	.30	.29	.95	.15	20.98	1	95	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Desire\_FWA\_Avg

b. Predictors: (Constant), Desire\_FWA\_Avg, Super\_support\_FWA\_Avg

Table 4

*Coefficients Table for Predicting Actual Use of FWA from Supervisor Support for FWA*

Model		B	SE(B)	β	t	p
1	(Constant)	1.40	.43		3.28	.001
	Desire_FWA_Avg	.50	.12	.39	4.14	.000
2	(Constant)	-1.39	.72		-1.93	.057
	Desire_FWA_Avg	.45	.11	.35	4.11	.000
	Super_support_FWA_Avg	.74	.16	.39	4.58	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Actual\_FWA\_Avg

However, Coworker Support for FWA is not a significant predictor of Actual Use of FWA while controlling for Desire to Use FWA, as shown by the lack of significance for Model 2 in Table 5 below. Thus, Hypothesis 1b was not supported.

Table 5

*Model Summary for Predicting Actual Use of FWA from Coworker Support for FWA*

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of Est.	Change Statistics				
					R <sup>2</sup> Δ	FΔ	df <sub>1</sub>	df <sub>2</sub>	Sig. FΔ
1	.39 <sup>a</sup>	.15	.14	1.04	.15	17.13	1	96	.000
2	.41 <sup>b</sup>	.17	.15	1.04	.02	2.02	1	95	.159

a. Predictors: (Constant), Desire\_FWA\_Avg

b. Predictors: (Constant), Desire\_FWA\_Avg, Coworker\_support\_FWA\_Avg

Table 6

*Coefficients Table for Predicting Actual Use of FWA from Coworker Support for FWA*

Model		B	SE(B)	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
1	(Constant)	1.40	.43		3.28	.001
	Desire_FWA_Avg	.50	.12	.39	4.14	.000
2	(Constant)	.55	.73		.75	.456
	Desire_FWA_Avg	.47	.12	.37	3.85	.000
	Coworker_support_FWA_Avg	.26	.18	.13	1.42	.159

a. Dependent Variable: Actual\_FWA\_Avg

Desire to Use Extended Leaves of Absence (ELA) accounts for 17% of the variance in Actual Use of ELA, as shown in Model 1 of Table 7 below. Hypothesis 2a predicts that Supervisor Support for ELA will be a significant predictor of Actual Use of ELA, while controlling for Desire to Use ELA. Hypothesis 2a was supported and Supervisor Support for ELA contributes an additional 9% of the variance in Actual Use of ELA, as shown in Model 2 of Table 7 below.

Table 7

*Model Summary for Predicting Actual Use of ELA from Supervisor Support for ELA*

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of Est.	Change Statistics				
					<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> $\Delta$	<i>F</i> $\Delta$	<i>df</i> <sub>1</sub>	<i>df</i> <sub>2</sub>	Sig. <i>F</i> $\Delta$
1	.43 <sup>a</sup>	.18	.17	.66	.18	20.01	1	89	.000
2	.52 <sup>b</sup>	.27	.26	.62	.09	10.88	1	88	.001

a. Predictors: (Constant), Desire\_ELA\_Avg

b. Predictors: (Constant), Desire\_ELA\_Avg, Super\_support\_ELA\_Avg

Table 8

*Coefficients Table for Predicting Actual Use of ELA from Supervisor Support for ELA*

Model		B	SE(B)	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
1	(Constant)	.64	.18		3.57	.001
	Desire_ELA_Avg	.33	.07	.43	4.47	.000
2	(Constant)	-.41	.36		-1.13	.260
	Desire_ELA_Avg	.34	.07	.44	4.83	.000
	Super_support_ELA_Avg	.30	.09	.30	3.30	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Actual\_ELA\_Avg

Hypothesis 2b purports that Coworker Support for ELA is also a significant predictor of Actual Use of ELA while controlling for Desire to Use ELA. This hypothesis was not supported, as shown by the lack of significance for Model 2 in Table 9 below.

Table 9

*Model Summary for Predicting Actual Use of ELA from Coworker Support for ELA*

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of Est.	Change Statistics				
					<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> $\Delta$	<i>F</i> $\Delta$	<i>df</i> <sub>1</sub>	<i>df</i> <sub>2</sub>	Sig. <i>F</i> $\Delta$
1	.43 <sup>a</sup>	.18	.17	.66	.18	20.01	1	89	.000
2	.46 <sup>b</sup>	.21	.19	.65	.03	3.23	1	88	.076

a. Predictors: (Constant), Desire\_ELA\_Avg

b. Predictors: (Constant), Desire\_ELA\_Avg, Coworker\_support\_ELA\_Avg

Table 10

*Coefficients Table for Predicting Actual Use of ELA from Coworker Support for ELA*

Model		B	SE(B)	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
1	(Constant)	.64	.18		3.57	.001
	Desire_ELA_Avg	.33	.07	.43	4.47	.000
2	(Constant)	.02	.38		.06	.949
	Desire_ELA_Avg	.32	.07	.41	4.31	.000
	Coworker_support_ELA_Avg	.19	.10	.17	1.80	.076

a. Dependent Variable: Actual\_ELA\_Avg

The remaining four hypotheses suggest that support variables will moderate the relationship between actual use of and desire to use flexible work arrangements and extended leaves of absence. First, to reduce the effect of potentially problematic multicollinearity between predictors, the variables were centered. To test Hypothesis 3a that Supervisor Support for FWA moderates the relationship between Desire to Use FWA and Actual Use of FWA, Desire to Use FWA and Supervisor Support for FWA were entered as predictors of Actual Use of FWA in the first step of a regression analysis. These variables explain a significant amount of variance in Actual Use of FWA as shown in Model 1 of Table 11 below. In the second step, the interaction term between the centered variables for Desire to Use FWA and Supervisor Support for FWA was entered. Hypothesis 3a was not supported. See the results for Model 2 in Tables 11 and 12 below.

Table 11

*Model Summary for Moderating Effects of Supervisor Support for FWA on the Relationship between Desire to Use and Actual use of FWA*

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of Est.	Change Statistics				
					<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> Δ	<i>F</i> Δ	<i>df</i> <sub>1</sub>	<i>df</i> <sub>2</sub>	Sig. <i>F</i> Δ
1	.55 <sup>a</sup>	.30	.29	.95	.30	20.84	2	95	.000
2	.56 <sup>b</sup>	.31	.29	.95	.00	.59	1	94	.443

a. Predictors: (Constant), SuperFWA\_Centered, DesireFWA\_Centered

b. Predictors: (Constant), SuperFWA\_Centered, DesireFWA\_Centered, Desire\_X\_super\_FWA\_Centered

Table 12

*Coefficients Table for Moderating Effects of Supervisor Support for FWA on the Relationship between Desire to Use and Actual use of FWA*

Model		B	SE(B)	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
1	(Constant)	3.11	.10		32.44	.000
	DesireFWA_Centered	.45	.11	.35	4.11	.000
	SuperFWA_Centered	.74	.16	.39	4.58	.000
2	(Constant)	3.10	.10		32.15	.000
	DesireFWA_Centered	.44	.11	.34	3.88	.000
	SuperFWA_Centered	.74	.16	.39	4.52	.000
	Desire_X_super_FWA_Centered	.15	.19	.07	.77	.443

a. Dependent Variable: Actual\_FWA\_Avg

In a regression analysis to test if Coworker Support for FWA moderates the relationship between Desire to Use FWA and Actual Use of FWA, Hypothesis 3b, Desire to Use FWA and Coworker Support for FWA were entered as predictors of Actual Use of FWA in the first step of a regression analysis. These variables explain 15% of the variance in Actual Use of FWA, as shown in Model 1 of Table 13 below. In the second step, the interaction term between Desire to Use FWA and Coworker Support for FWA was entered. Similar to Hypothesis 3a, Hypothesis 3b, was not supported. See Model 2 of Tables 13 and 14 below.

Table 13

*Model Summary for Moderating Effects of Coworker Support for FWA on the Relationship between Desire to Use and Actual use of FWA*

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of Est.	Change Statistics				
					<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> $\Delta$	<i>F</i> $\Delta$	<i>df</i> <sub>1</sub>	<i>df</i> <sub>2</sub>	Sig. <i>F</i> $\Delta$
1	.41 <sup>a</sup>	.17	.15	1.04	.17	9.66	2	95	.000
2	.43 <sup>b</sup>	.18	.16	1.03	.01	1.41	1	94	.239

a. Predictors: (Constant), CoworkerFWA\_Centered, DesireFWA\_Centered

b. Predictors: (Constant), CoworkerFWA\_Centered, DesireFWA\_Centered, Desire\_X\_coworker\_FWA\_Centered

Table 14

*Coefficients Table for Moderating Effects of Coworker Support for FWA on the Relationship between Desire to Use and Actual use of FWA*

Model		B	SE(B)	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
1	(Constant)	3.11	.10		29.67	.000
	DesireFWA_Centered	.47	.12	.37	3.85	.000
	CoworkerFWA_Centered	.26	.18	.13	1.42	.159
2	(Constant)	3.08	.11		28.91	.000
	DesireFWA_Centered	.46	.12	.36	3.75	.000
	CoworkerFWA_Centered	.18	.19	.09	.92	.362
	Desire_X_coworker_FWA_Centered	.28	.23	.12	1.19	.239

a. Dependent Variable: Actual\_FWA\_Avg

Contrary to the results of moderation testing for Hypotheses 3a and 3b, Hypotheses 4a and 4b were supported, which suggests that Supervisor Support for ELA and Coworker Support for ELA each moderate the relationship between Desire to Use ELA and Actual Use of ELA. In the first step of a regression analysis, Desire to Use ELA and Supervisor Support for ELA were entered. These variables combined account for 26% of the variance in Actual Use of ELA. The results of the first step are in Model 1 in Table 15 below. In the second step, the interaction term between Desire to Use ELA and Supervisor Support for ELA was entered. Supervisor Support for ELA was found to moderate the relationship between Desire to Use ELA and Actual Use of ELA as shown in Model 2 in Tables 15 and 16 below.



Table 15

*Model Summary for Moderating Effects of Supervisor Support for ELA on the Relationship between Desire to Use and Actual use of ELA*

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of Est.	Change Statistics				
					R <sup>2</sup> Δ	FΔ	df <sub>1</sub>	df <sub>2</sub>	Sig. FΔ
1	.52 <sup>a</sup>	.27	.26	.62	.27	16.56	2	88	.000
2	.58 <sup>b</sup>	.34	.32	.60	.07	8.88	1	87	.004

a. Predictors: (Constant), SuperELA\_Centered, DesireELA\_Centered

b. Predictors: (Constant), SuperELA\_Centered, DesireELA\_Centered, Desire\_X\_super\_ELA\_Centered

Table 16

*Coefficients Table for Moderating Effects of Supervisor Support for ELA on the Relationship between Desire to Use and Actual use of ELA*

Model		B	SE(B)	β	t	p
1	(Constant)	1.38	.07		21.03	.000
	DesireELA_Centered	.34	.07	.44	4.83	.000
	SuperELA_Centered	.30	.09	.30	3.30	.001
2	(Constant)	1.38	.06		22.04	.000
	DesireELA_Centered	.33	.07	.43	4.91	.000
	SuperELA_Centered	.34	.09	.34	3.83	.000
	Desire_X_super_ELA_Centered	.27	.09	.26	2.98	.004

a. Dependent Variable: Actual\_ELA\_Avg

A similar analysis was performed for Coworker Support for ELA. In the first step, Desire to Use ELA and Coworker Support for ELA account for 19% of the variance in Actual Use of ELA, as shown in Model 1 of Table 17 below. The results of adding the interaction term between Desire to Use ELA and Coworker Support for ELA indicate that Hypothesis 4b is supported and Coworker Support for ELA moderates the relationship between Desire to Use ELA and Actual Use of ELA. See Model 2 of Tables 17 and 18 below.

Table 17

*Model Summary for Moderating Effects of Coworker Support for ELA on the Relationship between Desire to Use and Actual use of ELA*

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of Est.	Change Statistics				
					R <sup>2</sup> Δ	FΔ	df <sub>1</sub>	df <sub>2</sub>	Sig. FΔ
1	.46 <sup>a</sup>	.21	.19	.65	.21	11.87	2	88	.000
2	.50 <sup>b</sup>	.25	.22	.64	.03	4.00	1	87	.049

a. Predictors: (Constant), CoworkerELA\_Centered, DesireELA\_Centered

b. Predictors: (Constant), CoworkerELA\_Centered, DesireELA\_Centered, Desire\_X\_coworker\_ELA\_Centered

Table 18

*Coefficients Table for Moderating Effects of Coworker Support for ELA on the Relationship between Desire to Use and Actual use of ELA*

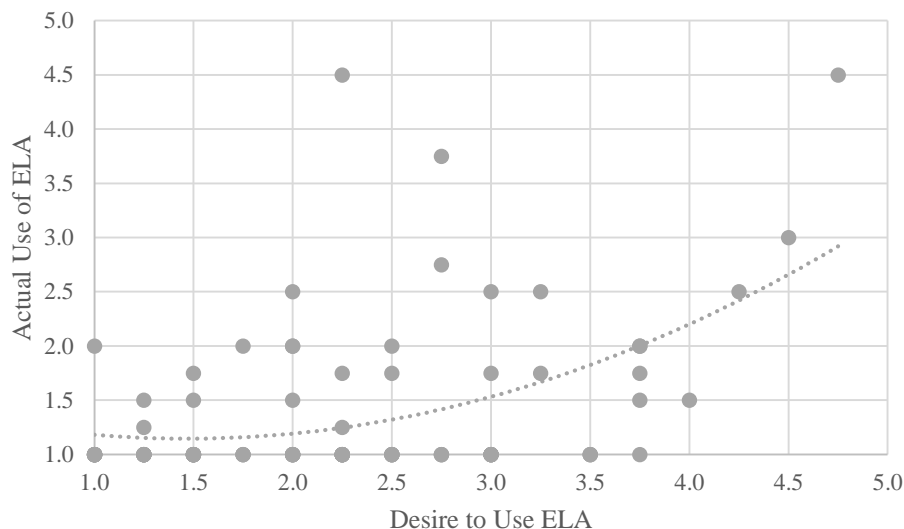
Model		B	SE(B)	β	t	p
1	(Constant)	1.38	.07		20.20	.000
	DesireELA_Centered	.32	.07	.41	4.31	.000
	CoworkerELA_Centered	.19	.10	.17	1.80	.076
2	(Constant)	1.36	.07		20.14	.000
	DesireELA_Centered	.31	.07	.40	4.25	.000
	CoworkerELA_Centered	.31	.12	.28	2.59	.011
	Desire_X_coworker_ELA_Centered	.25	.13	.22	2.00	.049

a. Dependent Variable: Actual\_ELA\_Avg

### Follow-up Analyses

Given that supervisor and coworker support were both found to moderate the relationship between desire to use and actual use of extended leaves of absences, follow-up analyses were performed to test if the Desire to Use ELA is nonlinearly related to Actual Use of ELA. A polynomial regression was conducted, and the analyses indicate that the relationship is curvilinear,  $\Delta F(1, 88) = 5.60, p = .02, \Delta R^2 = .05$ . See Figure 1 below for the scatterplot between Desire to Use ELA and Actual Use of ELA that

demonstrates this curvilinear relationship. As Desire to Use ELA increases, Actual Use of ELA increases by more than one unit.



*Figure 1.* Scatterplot of Desire to Use ELA and Actual Use of ELA with Trend Line Demonstrating Curvilinear Relationship Between the Two Variables.

In the survey instrument, an additional set of items were included to represent fear that use of flexible working arrangements or extended leaves of absences would limit future career opportunities for the individual. Cronbach's alpha to demonstrate reliability of the four fear items was .86. The items were averaged to create a Fear variable. Follow-up analyses were performed to test for the amount of variance in Actual Use of FWA and Actual Use of ELA predicted by Fear. Fear is significantly negatively correlated with Actual Use of FWA,  $r^2 = -.45$ ,  $p < .001$  and explains 19% of the variance in Actual Use of FWA,  $F(1, 96) = 23.98$ ,  $p < .001$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .19$ . Fear is not significantly correlated with Actual Use of ELA,  $r^2 = -.05$ ,  $p = .66$  and does not significantly contribute to the

amount of variance in Actual Use of ELA, however,  $F(1, 89) = .19, p = .66$ , adjusted  $R^2 = -.01$ . Table 19 below shows the coefficients results for the analyses run with Fear.

Table 19

*Coefficients Table for Predicting Actual Use of FWA and ELA from Fear, Desire to Use, and Support Variables*

Predictor	$\beta$	$p$
Model 1: Predicting Actual Use of Flexible Work Arrangements		
Fear	-.32	.00
Desire to use flexible work arrangements	.36	.00
Supervisor support for flexible work arrangements	.23	.02
Model 2: Predicting Actual Use of Flexible Work Arrangements		
Fear	-.46	.00
Desire to use flexible work arrangements	.39	.00
Coworker support for flexible work arrangements	-.05	.60
Model 3: Predicting Actual Use of Extended Leaves of Absence		
Fear	.14	.16
Desire to use flexible work arrangements	.45	.00
Supervisor support for extended leaves of absence	.37	.00
Model 4: Predicting Actual Use of Extended Leaves of Absence		
Fear	.05	.66
Desire to use flexible work arrangements	.41	.00
Coworker support for extended leaves of absence	.19	.07

$p < .05$

A variety of demographic variables were gathered. For dichotomous demographic variables with sufficient sample sizes, gender and dependents in the home, mean differences were reviewed for significance. The mean differences were not significant, as shown in Table 20 below. For continuous demographic variables, bivariate correlations between these variables and the variables of interest for the hypotheses were run. Desire to Use FWA was negatively correlated with the number of full-time employees in the respondent's current office location,  $r^2 = -.27, p = .01$ . Actual Use of FWA was positively

correlated with job title,  $r^2 = .41, p < .001$ ; as an employee increases in rank, their use of flexible work arrangements increases. Actual Use of FWA was also positively correlated with age,  $r^2 = .31, p = .002$ , but negatively correlated with the number of full-time employees in the employee's organization,  $r^2 = -.22, p = .03$ , and in the employee's current location,  $r^2 = -.34, p = .001$ . Desire to Use ELA was negatively correlated with the number of full-time employees in the employee's organization,  $r^2 = -.28, p = .02$ . Supervisor Support for FWA is also negatively correlated with the number of full-time employees in the employee's organization,  $r^2 = -.28, p = .006$ , and in the employee's current location,  $r^2 = -.27, p = .007$ . Table 21 below presents all bivariate correlations between continuous demographic variables and hypotheses variables.

Table 20

*Mean Differences for Dichotomous Demographic Variables*

Variable	Desire to use FWA	Actual use of FWA	Desire to use ELA	Actual use of ELA	Supervisor support for FWA	Coworker support for FWA	Supervisor support for ELA	Coworker support for ELA
Gender	-.12	.12	-.12	-.17	-.18	-.03	-.09	-.11
Dependents living in the home	.15	.40	.22	.07	-.05	.16	-.04	.21

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$ 

Table 21

*Bivariate Correlations for Continuous Demographic Variables and Hypotheses Variables*

Variable	Desire to use FWA	Actual use of FWA	Desire to use ELA	Actual use of ELA	Supervisor support for FWA	Coworker support for FWA	Supervisor support for ELA	Coworker support for ELA
Job Title	.19	.41**	-.04	-.11	.21	.00	.15	-.09
Age	.17	.31**	.07	.00	.05	-.02	.07	.06
Amount of time spent traveling for work	.12	.14	.08	.07	-.09	-.08	.02	.11
# of vacation days provided each year	.05	.04	.01	.09	-.02	.13	.17	.01
# of sick days provided each year	-.04	-.07	-.11	-.09	-.20	-.09	-.06	-.27
# of full-time employees in entire organization	-.17	-.22*	-.28*	-.19	-.28**	-.10	-.10	-.14
# of full-time employees in current location	-.27**	-.34**	-.07	-.06	-.27**	-.16	-.08	-.13

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$ 

Note. Job title is coded as: 1=Administrative &amp; Support Staff; 2=Analyst; 3=Junior Consultant; 4=Senior Consultant; 5=Executive Leadership

## CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION

In the literature on work-life balance, the supportiveness of an organization's culture is a main factor to indicate the likelihood of employees making use of the work-life balance policies. Yet, very little of the research on barriers to use of work-life balance policies focuses exclusively on consulting firms. This study was intended to confirm the effect of two aspects of organizational culture, supervisor support and coworker support, on consulting firm employees' use of flexible work arrangements and extended leaves of absence, which are two of the more common work-life balance options. The results of this study indicate that, if employees want to use flexible work arrangements and/or extended leaves of absence, support from their supervisors will help them put such practice into place. This finding is consistent with literature that shows immediate supervisor support affects employee use of work-life balance programs (Darcy, McCarthy, Hill, & Grady, 2012; Lauzun, Morganson, Major, & Green, 2010).

Employees in consulting firms place less value, however, in the opinions of their coworkers in this study. Coworker support was modestly correlated with actual use of flexible work arrangements, and with actual use of extended leaves of absence, but did not significantly predict actual use when controlling for desire to use these work-life balance options. It seems reasonable that supervisors have more influence than coworkers on an employee's actual use of work-life balance options, given that supervisors typically have greater authority in the employee's performance appraisal and compensation rewards. The limited research on the effects of the negative stigma associated with using work-life balance options imposed by coworkers and employees themselves (Lester, 2013; Rudman & Mescher, 2013; Williams, Blair-Loy, & Berdahl, 2013) would suggest a

stronger relationship between coworker opinions and an employee's use. Future studies should confirm that these findings with respect to employee opinions of coworker support are a consequence of the consulting firm culture.

When reviewing the moderation hypotheses, the regression results indicated that the relationship between desire to use and actual use of flexible work arrangements does not change with the level of support from supervisors or coworkers. This finding may be due to the fact that in consulting firms, flexible work arrangements are a necessary part of the consultant's life. Consultants' schedules are set by the demands of clients which can come at any time of day and day of the week, and a certain degree of flexibility is required to meet the demands. For example, to meet a client's Monday deadline, a consultant may have to work during the prior weekend but then takes the following Friday afternoon off if there are no further impending deadlines. Wu, Rusyidi, Claiborne, and McCarthy (2013) found that childcare workers believed their supervisors lacked power to provide support. This reason may hold true in consulting firms too, in that the clients are the managers of the work, rather than supervisors, and it is the client demands and project requirements that ultimately drive use of flexible work arrangements. Future research may explore other potential barriers that would increase or decrease the use of flexible work arrangements beyond the level of desire to use them.

With respect to extended leaves of absence, in this study, employees wish to use them fairly infrequently, on average once every five to ten years. Employees actually use them less than once every ten years, and perhaps never in their careers. The relationship between desire to use and actual use of extended leaves of absence *is* influenced by the amount of support provided by supervisors and coworkers. Given that it is a nonlinear



relationship, it appears that support provided by colleagues will result in more frequent actual use than just desire alone, and future studies should confirm this phenomenon. In her research of work-life balance at Accenture, Klun (2008) cites the story of an employee who, at the suggestion of her supervisor, took advantage of Accenture's leave of absence program. Sometimes a little encouragement to take time off is needed!

Fear of limited future career opportunities was introduced as a supplemental variable, as it likely follows that this fear prevents employees from using work-life balance options. Fear was significantly related to actual use of flexible work arrangements. Interestingly, the work by Konrad and Yang (2012) found that using flexible work arrangements actually increased the likelihood of promotion due to the employees being more productive and better able to meet work demands. The significant correlation found in this research study combined with the findings of Konrad and Yang (2012) might indicate that employers should attempt to mitigate fear associated with using flexible work arrangements, as it provides positive outcomes for both employees and employers. However, fear was not significantly related to use of extended leaves of absence. Perhaps fear was not the primary factor in lack of interest in taking a leave of absence, particularly if most participants would use it for child or other family care, rather than personal time off. In the case of using an extended leave of absence for family care, perhaps the necessity of providing care overshadows any fear of limited career opportunities. This may explain the lack of significance, if most participants viewed the variable as the necessity of a leave of absence in the event of extraordinary circumstances, rather than the choice of a leave of absence for ordinary, but extended, vacation.

Actual use of flexible work arrangements was significantly positively correlated with job title and age. This result is unsurprising; the more senior an employee is and the older an employee is, the more likely the employee is to have familial responsibility and outside-of-work commitments that require a certain amount of flexibility. The limited research on job level and how it relates to work-life balance is focused on work/family conflict. DiRenzo, Greenhaus, and Weer (2011) found that more senior employees experience greater conflict between work and family, and perhaps this results in more usage of flexible work arrangements in consulting firms to meet the demands of both sides, work and family. These relationships between actual use of flexible work arrangements and age or job title may be curvilinear, and future studies should explore this possibility.

Actual use of flexible work arrangements was significantly *negatively* correlated with number of employees in both the organization and the employee's current location. As firm size increases, use of flexible work arrangements decreases. This is an important finding for large organizations whose goals include enabling employees to lead balanced lives. Concentrated effort and a culture of encouragement may be required to ensure use of flexible work arrangements, which contributes to retention, productivity, job satisfaction, and engagement. A study of Australian construction companies by Lingard, Turner, and Charlesworth (2015) experienced similar findings in that employees of larger companies sensed a higher priority on work over family obligations than those employees of smaller companies. A negative correlation was also found for the number of employees in the organization and actual use of extended leaves of absence. This is potentially an odd finding given that in larger consulting firms, there are more employees

among whom to spread the work, and more employees to account for others' absences. However, it may be that in smaller firms, the amount of work may serve as an enabler (not enough work) to ultimately making use of an extended leave of absence.

Perhaps the most surprising result is the lack of significant mean differences found for gender and the number of dependents living in the home. Neither men and women, nor those with versus without dependents, significantly differ in their desire for or actual use of flexible work arrangements and extended leaves of absence. This finding was echoed in the research by Darcy, McCarthy, Hill, and Grady (2011) when they did not find significant differences between men and women and between parents and non-parents in their views of work-life balance. From this study, it appears that traditional gender roles are not the norm in consulting firms, at least with respect to desire and use of work-life balance policies. The research by Duckworth and Buzzanell (2009) postulates that men are undergoing ideological changes from their norms as primary breadwinners and expanding their responsibilities to include family and community. Future research, including qualitative studies, should further explore the reasons why women and men do or do not want to make use of flexible work arrangements and extended leaves of absence, to contribute to more of the variance beyond the simple desire to use them.

Limitations of this study include the snowball method used to gather participants. The representativeness of the sample participants is somewhat unclear, as participants could be concentrated in just a small number of consulting firms. Secondly, this study has not looked beyond the initial level of supervisor support to explain reasons why supervisors may not support flexible work arrangements and/or extended leaves of absence. Further research should be conducted on other organizational barriers that may

limit the amount of support supervisors can provide, including limitations of authority and the nature of the job (Lauzun, Morganson, Major, and Green, 2010). Similarly, further research should be conducted on reasons why coworkers may not support each other in their desires to use flexible work arrangements and/or extended leaves of absence. While the participants were largely full-time employees in this study, future studies may research the specific factors that enable part-time employees to work part-time and if such factors can enable full-time employees to make use of flexible work arrangements. This study is an exploratory study of work-life balance in consulting firms, and future studies should attempt to replicate the findings to improve the generalizability of the results. Finally, other aspects of organizational culture may also contribute to employee use of work-life balance options in consulting firms and should be studied in future research.

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**APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A: Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Variables**

Variable	<i>n</i>
Job Title	
Administrative & Support Staff	4
Analyst	14
Junior Consultant	17
Senior Consultant	43
Executive Leadership	12
Other ( <i>excluded from correlational analyses</i> )	12
Gender	
Male	53
Female	50
Age	
Under 30	26
30-39	41
40-49	19
50-59	13
60-69	4
70 or older	0
Amount of time spent traveling for work	
0-20%	81
21-40%	15
41-60%	3
61-80%	4
More than 80%	0
Salaried or Hourly	
Salaried	96
Hourly	6
Dependents currently living in the home	
Yes	51
No	52
Full-time or part-time	
Full-time	98
Part-time	5
Number of vacation days provided each year	
0-5 days	2
6-10 days	8
11-15 days	25
15-20 days	24
More than 20 days	36
I'm not sure ( <i>excluded from correlational analyses</i> )	8

*Table continues*

*Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Variables Table continued*

Variable	<i>n</i>
Number of sick days provided each year	
0-5 days	25
6-10 days	12
11-15 days	4
16-20 days	0
More than 20 days	1
I'm not sure ( <i>excluded from correlational analyses</i> )	15
Not separate from vacation days ( <i>excluded from correlational analyses</i> )	45
Number of full-time employees in entire organization	
0-25 employees	22
26-50 employees	6
51-100 employees	10
101-500 employees	12
More than 500	53
Number of full-time employees in current location	
0-25 employees	46
26-50 employees	5
51-100 employees	9
101-500 employees	35
More than 500	8

## **APPENDIX B: Message Soliciting Survey Responses**

As a Master's student in the Industrial/Organizational Psychology program at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), I am conducting research on work-life balance. The goal of this research study is to determine if certain factors prevent employees from utilizing flexible working arrangements and extended leaves of absence policies.

The survey is anonymous and participation is completely voluntary. To be eligible for this survey, you must be at least 18 years old. The survey will take 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

If you agree to the terms above, please click on the link below to access the survey (or copy and paste the link in your Internet browser).

[https://mtsupsychology.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_aaUM8nbCYYLVZrL](https://mtsupsychology.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_aaUM8nbCYYLVZrL)

The Internal Review Board at MTSU has approved this survey. If you have any questions, please contact the researcher, Kristina Doerr, at [knd3f@mtmail.mtsu.edu](mailto:knd3f@mtmail.mtsu.edu).

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation!

Kristina Doerr  
Knd3f@mtmail.mtsu.edu



## APPENDIX C: Questionnaire

Thank you for your participation in this study. You must be at least 18 years old to participate. Your responses are anonymous; no identifying information will be associated with your answers. You may also return to this survey at a later date if you do not complete it in one sitting, and your previous answers will be saved.

### *Screening Questions*

1. Do you currently work at a consulting firm?
  - Yes
  - No

*If the answer is Yes, skip the next question.*

2. Have you worked at a consulting firm in the last 5 years?
  - Yes
  - No

*If the answer is Yes, a statement will appear that states “Please answer the remaining questions in this survey with respect to your experience at a consulting firm.” and the participant will be directed to continue on with the survey. If the answer is No, branch to:*

“Thank you for your interest. Unfortunately, you do not meet the criteria to participate in the survey.”

Flexible work arrangements are employee work schedules that differ from the organization's standard operating hours. This includes modifications in the daily hours, weekdays worked, and location in which work is performed (outside of the office). For example, if a company's standard operating hours are from 8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday, a flexible work arrangement could mean that an employee works from 6am until 3pm, or perhaps works 10 hours per day, Monday through Thursday, or maybe chooses to work from home on occasion.

3. To the extent you are aware, does your organization allow flexible working arrangements?
  - Yes
  - No

*If the answer is Yes, then display the Flexible Working Arrangements questions (items 6-13, 23-33, and 43-54). If the answer is No, then don't display the Flexible Working Arrangements questions.*

In this study, extended leaves of absence are periods of time during which employees *choose* to not attend work. These periods are typically unpaid, but employees' jobs are secure upon return to work. For example, employees may take extended vacations beyond the amount of accumulated vacation days; employees may *choose* to make use of the leave of absence permitted by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), or perhaps employees may take time off to work full-time for volunteer organizations like the Peace Corps.

4. To the extent you are aware, does your organization permit employees to take extended leaves of absence?
  - Yes
  - No

*If the answer is Yes, display the Extended Leaves of Absence questions (items 14-21, 34-42, and 55-62) and skip the next question:*

5. Does your organization employ more than 50 employees?
  - Yes
  - No

*If the answer is Yes, then display the Extended Leaves of Absence questions. If the answer is No, then don't display the Extended Leaves of Absence questions.*

Display items 6-13 if the answer to 3 is Yes.

The following questions ask for your *desire* to use flexible working arrangements. Please answer them with respect to your experience at a consulting firm.

	Fewer than 5 times per year	5 to 10 times per year	A few days each month	A few days each week	Every day
6. How often would you want to work flexible hours?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. How often would you want to adjust the days of the week that you work?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. How often would you want to work from a location other than the office?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. In general, how often would you want to use a flexible working arrangement?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The following questions ask about your *actual* use of flexible working arrangements. Please answer them with respect to your experience at a consulting firm.

	Hardly ever or never	Less than half of the time that I want to	Half of the time I want to	Most of the time I want to	Any time I want to
10. How often do you work flexible hours?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. How often do you adjust the days of the week that you work?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. How often do you work from a location other than the office?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. In general, how often do you use a flexible working arrangement?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Display items 14-21 if the answers to 4 is Yes; or if 4 is No but 5 is Yes

The following questions ask for your *desire* to use extended leaves of absence. Please answer them with respect to your experience at a consulting firm.

	0 to 1 times in my career	Once every 10 years	Once every 5 years	Every other year	Every year
14. How often would you want to take an extended leave of absence for vacation use?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. How often would you want to take an extended leave of absence for family care?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. How often would you want to take an extended leave of absence for volunteering?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. How often would you want to take an extended leave of absence for any other reason?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The following questions ask you about your *actual* use of extended leaves of absence. Please answer them with respect to your experience at a consulting firm.

	Hardly ever or never	Less than half of the time that I want to	Half of the time I want to	Most of the time I want to	Any time I want to
18. How often do you take an extended leave of absence for vacation use?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. How often do you take an extended leave of absence for personal or family care?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. How often do you take an extended leave of absence for volunteering?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. How often do you take an extended leave of absence for any other reason?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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*Quality Assurance question:*

22. The current year is 2015.
- True
  - False

*Display items 23-33 if the answer to 3 is Yes.*

The following statements ask for your opinion about how supportive you feel your immediate supervisor is with regard to flexible working arrangements. Please indicate your level of agreement with respect to your consulting firm experience.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
23. I feel comfortable requesting a change in my work schedule from my supervisor.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. I feel my supervisor makes an effort to understand my need to be flexible.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. My supervisor suggests changes in my work schedule so I can better meet my work demands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26. My supervisor never permits me to change my schedule.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27. I can bring up conflicts with my work and personal schedule to my supervisor.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28. My supervisor always grants my requests for a change in my schedule.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
29. My supervisor allows me to attend personal appointments during the workday.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30. My supervisor allows me to run personal errands during the workday.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31. I can rely on my supervisor to be understanding if I have an immediate need to change my schedule.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. My supervisor has no control over my schedule.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
33. My supervisor encourages me to strike a balance between my work and personal life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Display items 34-42 if the answer to 4 is Yes; or if 4 is No but 5 is Yes*

The following statements ask for your opinion about how supportive you feel your immediate supervisor is with regard to extended leaves of absence. Please indicate your level of agreement with respect to your consulting firm experience.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
34. I feel comfortable requesting an extended leave of absence from my supervisor.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
35. I feel my supervisor makes an effort to understand my wish to take an extended leave of absence, if I want to take one.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
36. My supervisor suggests I take an extended leave of absence to suit my needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
37. My supervisor never permits me to take an extended leave of absence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
38. I can bring up conflicts with my desire to take an extended leave of absence to my supervisor.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
39. My supervisor will likely grant my request for an extended leave of absence if I want one.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
40. I can rely on my supervisor to be understanding if I have an immediate need to take an extended leave of absence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
41. My supervisor will not factor into my decision to take an extended leave of absence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
42. For quality assurance purposes, please indicate "Strongly Agree" for this item.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Display items 43-54 if the answer to 3 is Yes.

The following statements ask for your opinion about how supportive you feel your coworkers are with regard to flexible working arrangements. Please indicate your level of agreement with respect to your consulting firm experience.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
43. I feel comfortable discussing changes in my work schedule with my coworkers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
44. I feel my coworkers make an effort to understand my need to be flexible.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
45. My coworkers suggest changes in my work schedule so I can better meet my work demands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
46. My coworkers would not like it if I changed my schedule.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
47. I can bring up conflicts with my desire to take an extended leave of absence to my coworkers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
48. My coworkers always support my desire for a change in my schedule.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
49. My coworkers don't care if I schedule personal appointments during the workday.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
50. My coworkers don't care if I run personal errands during the workday.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
51. For quality assurance purposes, please select "Disagree" for this item.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
52. I can rely on my coworkers to be understanding if I have an immediate need to change my schedule.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
53. The opinions of my coworkers do not influence my desire to change my schedule.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
54. My coworkers encourage me to strike a balance between my work and personal life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Display items 55-62 if the answer to 4 is Yes; or if 4 is No but 5 is Yes*

The following statements ask for your opinion about how supportive you feel your coworkers are with regard to extended leaves of absence. Please indicate your level of agreement with respect to your consulting firm experience.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
55. I feel comfortable discussing my desire to take an extended leave of absence with my coworkers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
56. I feel my coworkers make an effort to understand my need to take an extended leave of absence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
57. My coworkers suggest I take an extended leave of absence to suit my needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
58. My coworkers would not like it if I took an extended leave of absence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
59. I can bring up conflicts with my work and personal schedule to my coworkers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
60. My coworkers will likely support my desire to take an extended leave of absence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
61. I can rely on my coworkers to be understanding if I have an immediate need to take an extended leave of absence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
62. My coworkers will not factor in my decision to take an extended leave of absence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Display items 63-79 if answers to 3, 4, or 5 are Yes:*

Please indicate your level of agreement with respect to your consulting firm experience.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
63. I'm afraid that using a flexible working arrangement may hurt my future career opportunities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
64. I'm afraid that taking an extended leave of absence may hurt my future career opportunities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
65. My promotion opportunities may be lessened if I take an extended leave of absence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
66. Employees in my organization who use flexible working arrangements don't progress as fast as others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

67. Please provide any comments you have about the supportiveness of your supervisor and coworkers on flexible work arrangements and/or extended leaves of absence with respect to your consulting firm experience. Any and all comments are welcome.

Please answer the following questions with respect to your consulting firm experience.

68. Which of these best fits your role?
- Administrative & Support Staff (non-consulting)
  - Analyst
  - Junior Consultant
  - Senior Consultant
  - Executive Leadership
  - Other *Please Specify:* \_\_\_\_\_
69. Which best describes you?
- Male
  - Female
70. Please indicate your age range.
- Under 30
  - 30-39
  - 40-49
  - 50-59
  - 60-69
  - 70 or older
71. What percent of time do you travel for work?
- 0-20%
  - 21-40%
  - 41-60%
  - 61-80%
  - More than 80%
72. Are you a salaried or hourly employee?
- Salaried
  - Hourly
73. Do you have dependents currently living in your home?
- Yes
  - No

74. How many vacation days are you provided with each year?

- 0-5 days
- 6-10 days
- 11-15 days
- 16-20 days
- More than 20 days
- I'm not sure

75. How much sick time/short term disability are you provided with each year, if separate from vacation days?

- 0-5 days
- 6-10 days
- 11-15 days
- 16-20 days
- More than 20 days
- I'm not sure
- Not separate from vacation days

76. Are you full-time or part-time?

- Full-time
- Part-time

*If the participant indicates "Part-time" in the previous question, then display this question:*

77. Typically how many hours do you work per week?

- Fewer than 20 hours
- 20-29 hours
- 30 or more hours

78. How many full-time employees work for your *entire organization*?

- 0-25 employees
- 25-50 employees
- 50-100 employees
- 100-500 employees
- More than 500

79. How many full-time employees work in *your current location*?

- 0-25 employees
- 26-50 employees
- 51-100 employees
- 101-500 employees
- More than 500

Thank you for your time and participation! Click the "Submit Survey Responses" button below to submit your responses.

Please contact the researcher, Kristina Doerr, at [knd3f@mtmail.mtsu.edu](mailto:knd3f@mtmail.mtsu.edu) if you have any questions or wish to learn about the results of this study.

**APPENDIX D: Reliability Analyses for All Variables**

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Desire to use flexible work arrangements	4	.81
Actual use of flexible work arrangements	4	.81
Desire to use extended leaves of absence	4	.81
Actual use of extended leaves of absence	4	.74
Supervisor support for flexible work arrangements	11	.83
Supervisor support for extended leaves of absence	8	.84
Coworker support for flexible work arrangements	11	.84
Coworker support for extended leaves of absence	8	.85

## APPENDIX E: IRB Approval



4/16/2015

Investigator(s): Kristina Doerr, Patrick McCarthy  
 Department: Psychology  
 Investigator(s) Email Address: knd3f@mtmail.mtsu.edu; Patrick.McCarthy@mtsu.edu

Protocol Title: SUPERVISOR AND COWORKER BARRIERS TO EMPLOYEES' USE OF FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTENDED LEAVES OF ABSENCE IN CONSULTING FIRMS

Protocol Number: #15-300

Dear Investigator(s),

Your study has been designated to be exempt. The exemption is pursuant to 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) Educational Tests, Surveys, Interviews, or Observations.

We will contact you annually on the status of your project. If it is completed, we will close it out of our system. You do not need to complete a progress report and you will not need to complete a final report. It is important to note that your study is approved for the life of the project and does not have an expiration date.

The following changes must be reported to the Office of Compliance before they are initiated:

- Adding new subject population
- Adding a new investigator
- Adding new procedures (e.g., new survey; new questions to your survey)
- A change in funding source
- Any change that makes the study no longer eligible for exemption.

The following changes do not need to be reported to the Office of Compliance:

- Editorial or administrative revisions to the consent or other study documents
- Increasing or decreasing the number of subjects from your proposed population

If you encounter any serious unanticipated problems to participants, or if you have any questions as you conduct your research, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Lauren K. Qualls, Graduate Assistant  
 Office of Compliance  
 615-494-8918

MTSU Compliance Office  
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 1301 E. Main St.  
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