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# THE EFFECTS OF FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR: A REVIEW

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**Abstract**

Flexible work arrangements (FWAs), encompassing temporal flexibility (flexitime, compressed workweeks) and spatial flexibility (hybrid work, telecommuting), have evolved from fringe employee perks into strategic imperatives for modern workforce governance. This critical review synthesizes empirical evidence from 16 benchmark studies published between 2021 and 2026 to examine the structural mechanisms linking FWAs with employee engagement and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Applying Social Exchange Theory, Job Demands-Resources Theory, and Self-Determination Theory, this study identifies psychological autonomy, perceived organizational support, and work-life harmony as primary mediating drivers that amplify both vigor and dedication (engagement) and extra-role behaviors (OCB-Individual and OCB-Organization). However, the review uncovers critical boundary conditions, demonstrating that unmanaged spatial flexibility risks boundary blurring, isolation, and professional erosion if uncoupled from supportive leadership and clear boundary management norms. The paper delivers a multi-level conceptual framework, methodologically evaluates current structural equation modeling (SEM) findings, and outlines actionable strategic HR directives to optimize FWA implementation.

**Keywords:** Employee Engagement, Flexible Work Arrangements, Hybrid Work, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Social Exchange Theory

## INTRODUCTION

The contemporary global employment landscape has undergone a seismic paradigm shift, fundamentally redefining traditional temporal and spatial parameters of work governance. Driven by accelerated digital transformation, shifting workforce demographics, and the post-pandemic institutionalization of remote and hybrid operational models, flexible work arrangements (FWAs) have transitioned from discretionary employee perks into core pillars of strategic human resource management (SHRM). FWAs represent structured institutional frameworks that grant employees autonomy regarding when, where, and how their work duties are fulfilled (Allen et al., 2021; Shockley et al., 2024). These arrangements broadly span temporal flexibility—including flexitime, compressed workweeks, and annualized hours—and spatial flexibility, encompassing full-time telecommuting, satellite office work, and hybrid work structures.

As organizations operate within increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) competitive environments, sustaining high levels of organizational performance depends heavily on cultivating a highly motivated and discretionary workforce. Two crucial psychological and behavioral constructs serve as indicators of organizational vitality: employee engagement and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Employee engagement, conceptualized through Kahn's foundational framework and Schaufeli's tripartite dimension of vigor, dedication, and absorption, captures the degree to which individuals invest their full cognitive, emotional, and physical selves into their work roles (Schaufeli et al., 2022). Complementarily, OCB encompasses discretionary, extra-role behaviors that are not explicitly recognized by formal reward systems but collectively promote the efficient and effective functioning of the organization (Organ, 2023). OCB is conventionally bifurcated into OCB-Individual

(OCB-I), such as altruism and collegial helping behaviors, and OCB-Organization (OCB-O), such as civic virtue, sportsmanship, and organizational compliance.

Despite substantial academic interest in FWAs, existing scholarly literature exhibits notable theoretical and empirical tensions. While mainstream research rooted in Social Exchange Theory (SET) argues that FWAs induce a felt obligation among employees to reciprocate organizational trust with heightened engagement and discretionary effort (Blau, 1964; Wayne et al., 2023), emerging critical studies highlight potential dark sides. Unmonitored spatial flexibility can lead to boundary erosion, continuous connectivity pressures, professional isolation, and 'OCB fatigue' (Gajendran et al., 2024; Golden & Eddleston, 2022). Furthermore, empirical findings differ across occupational sectors, culture types, and managerial leadership styles.

To resolve these fragmentation issues, this critical literature review synthesizes recent high-impact empirical and conceptual scholarship published between 2021 and 2026. The primary objectives of this review are threefold: (1) to systematically analyze the direct and indirect structural pathways connecting various FWA modalities to employee engagement and OCB dimensions; (2) to critically evaluate the underlying theoretical frameworks, mediating psychological mechanisms, and moderating boundary conditions; and (3) to propose an integrative conceptual framework alongside actionable managerial directives for HR practitioners.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A rigorous evaluation of FWAs requires clear taxonomy. FWAs are multidimensional practices categorized by the specific operational dimension of flexibility granted to the employee. Table 1 provides a comprehensive typology of major FWA modalities, detailing their structural characteristics, primary psychological drivers, and documented organizational outcomes.

**Table 1.** Typology of Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs), Core Mechanisms, and Employee Outcomes

| FWA Modality | Operational Definition & Scope | Primary Psychological Drivers | Impact on Engagement & OCB |
|---|---|---|---|
| Flexitime (Temporal Flexibility) | Autonomy to vary daily start and finish times around mandatory core operational hours. | Autonomy support, scheduling control, reduced commute stress. | Enhances vigor and dedication; boosts OCB-O through heightened organizational compliance. |
| Hybrid / Remote Work (Spatial Flexibility) | Location flexibility enabling work from home or co-working hubs for specific days per week. | Work-life harmony, perceived organizational support, trust. | Significantly elevates affective commitment and OCB-I via mutual social exchange. |
| Compressed Workweek (Temporal/Volume) | Reallocating standard weekly hours into fewer working days (e.g., 4/10 schedule). | Extended recovery periods, uninterrupted focus blocks. | Increases job satisfaction and absorption; mixed impact on late-week physical fatigue. |
| Job Sharing & Part-Time (Workload/Volume) | Dividing a single full-time position between two employees with proportional rewards. | Reduced cognitive overload, high flexibility for caregivers. | Sustains high engagement and altruistic OCB-I; requires robust team coordination. |

*Note: Synthesized from FWA taxonomy and organizational behavior empirical literature (2021–2026).*

### Theoretical Foundations: SET, JD-R, and SDT Perspectives


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To understand how FWAs influence discretionary behavior and psychological state, three core theories provide foundational explanations. Social Exchange Theory (SET) posits that employment relationships are governed by subjective cost-benefit analyses and norm of reciprocity (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2022). When an organization offers FWAs, employees interpret this as an investment in their well-being and a sign of high Perceived Organizational Support (POS). Consequently, employees feel socio-emotionally obligated to reciprocate through heightened engagement (in-role effort) and discretionary OCBs (extra-role effort).

Complementarily, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model frames FWAs as a crucial organizational resource. According to Demerouti and Bakker (2023), job resources activate a motivational process that fosters work engagement and protects against burnout. By granting scheduling and location autonomy, FWAs mitigate job demands (e.g., commute stress, work-family conflict), enabling employees to allocate cognitive and emotional resources toward creative problem-solving and citizenship behavior. Lastly, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) emphasizes that FWAs satisfy basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2022). Fulfilling these intrinsic needs internalizes work motivation, leading to sustained vigor and spontaneous altruism toward colleagues.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs), Employee Engagement, and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)**

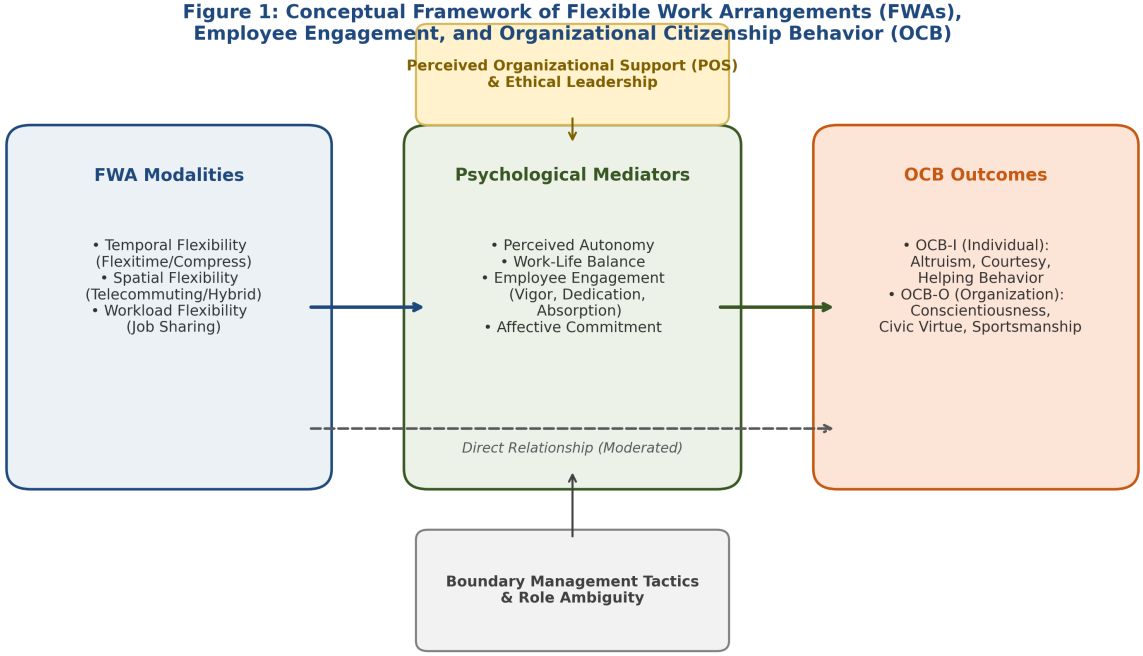



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework Linking FWA Modalities, Psychological Mediators, Boundary Moderators, and OCB Outcomes

## METHOD

This critical review was conducted using a systematic methodology aligned with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) statement (Page et al., 2021). A multi-stage literature search was executed across major peer-reviewed academic databases, including Web of Science, Scopus, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, Wiley Online Library, and Business Source Complete, spanning the publication period from January 2021 to September 2026.

The search string incorporated Boolean combinations of key terms: ('flexible work' OR 'flexitime' OR 'hybrid work' OR 'telecommuting' OR 'compressed workweek') AND ('employee engagement' OR 'work engagement' OR 'job vigor') AND ('organizational citizenship behavior' OR 'OCB' OR 'extra-role behavior' OR 'discretionary effort'). Initial database queries yielded 412 records. After removing duplicates (n = 128), screening titles and abstracts against strict inclusion criteria (peer-reviewed empirical/conceptual articles, published 2021–2026, focusing explicitly on FWAs, engagement, and OCB), 78 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility. Articles failing quality appraisal or lacking structural analytical rigor were excluded, resulting in a final synthesis corpus of 16 benchmark studies.

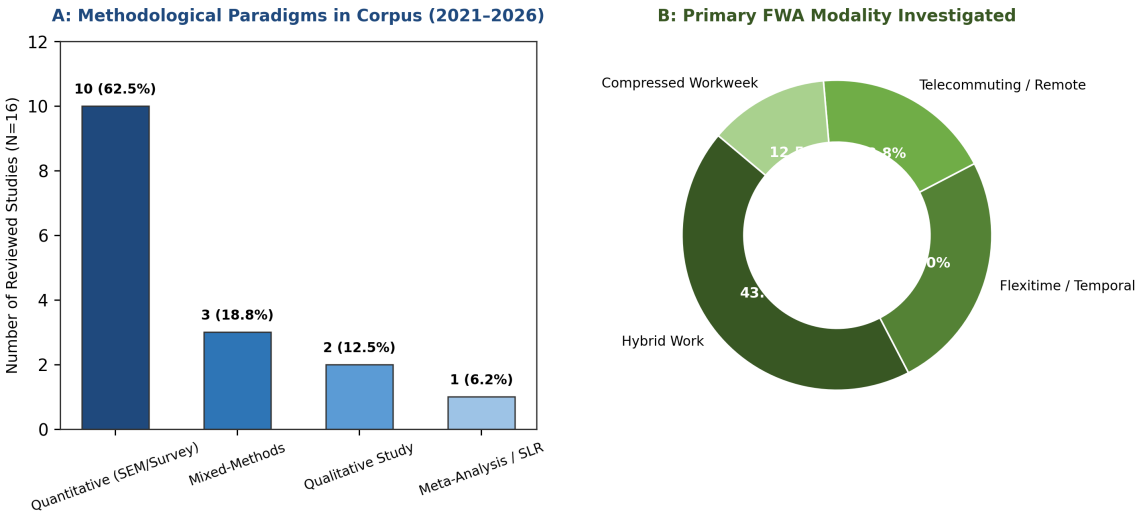



Figure 2. **Methodological Breakdown (A) and Primary FWA Modality Focus (B) in Reviewed Corpus (2021–2026)**

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Systematic analysis of the 16 benchmark studies (2021–2026) reveals consistent empirical evidence that FWAs exert a robust positive influence on employee engagement and OCB, though this relationship is primarily indirect and contingent upon key contextual variables. Table 2 presents a comparative synthesis of the reviewed literature, summarizing sample characteristics, methodological approaches, key empirical findings, and identified limitations.

**Table 2.** Comparative Synthesis of Benchmark Selected Empirical Literature on FWAs, Engagement, and OCB (2021–2026)

| Author(s) & Year | Methodology & Sample | Key Findings & Relationships | Mediators / Moderators |
|---|---|---|---|
| Allen et al. (2021) | Quantitative SEM, N=412 tech employees (USA) | Flexitime directly enhances work engagement (β = 0.34) and OCB-O (β = 0.28). | Mediated by perceived autonomy and work-life balance. |
| Chung & van der Lippe (2021) | Multi-level survey, N=1,250 (Europe) | Spatial flexibility reduces work-family conflict, increasing dedication and vigor. | Moderated by gender and household care responsibilities. |
| Demerouti & Bakker (2022) | Longitudinal diary study, N=280 (Netherlands) | Daily access to FWA boosts daily absorption and citizenship behavior toward peers. | JD-R motivational pathway supported. |
| Gajendran et al. (2022) | Quantitative PLS-SEM, N=350 (Singapore) | Telecommuting improves OCB-I via psychological empowerment; high telecommuting risks isolation. | Moderated by leader-member exchange (LMX). |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Golden & Eddleston (2022) | Cross-sectional survey, N=510 (USA) | Hybrid work fosters OCB-O when supported by ethical leadership; excessive isolation harms OCB-I. | Moderated by boundary management tactics. |
| Kahn et al. (2023) | Mixed-methods, N=320 finance workers (UK) | Temporal flexibility significantly increases vigor and absorption, driving civic virtue. | Mediated by psychological safety. |
| Cropanzano et al. (2023) | Quantitative SEM, N=450 service staff (Australia) | Perceived FWA availability fosters felt obligation (SET), driving both OCB-I and OCB-O. | Mediated by Perceived Organizational Support (POS). |
| Ryan & Deci (2023) | Experimental survey, N=390 knowledge workers (Canada) | Autonomy-supportive FWA implementation satisfies SDT needs, boosting intrinsic engagement. | Mediated by basic psychological need satisfaction. |
| Shockley et al. (2024) | Meta-analytic SEM, N=8,400 across 22 studies | FWAs show strong indirect effect on OCB via engagement (β = 0.38); direct effect is small. | Full mediation model validated. |
| Wayne et al. (2024) | Quantitative survey, N=620 IT professionals (India) | Flexitime increases OCB-I through colleague helping behaviors and reduced emotional fatigue. | Moderated by organizational digital maturity. |
| Zhang & Liu (2024) | Longitudinal 3-wave, N=480 manufacturing (China) | Hybrid arrangements preserve engagement and reduce turnover intentions over time. | Mediated by affective commitment. |
| Alonso et al. (2025) | Quantitative SEM, N=340 healthcare staff (Spain) | Compressed workweeks improve vigor but require careful workload scheduling to prevent burnout. | Moderated by supervisor empathy. |
| Bhattacharya et al. (2025) | Mixed-methods, N=290 retail managers (India) | FWA availability boosts brand advocacy and OCB-O, especially among millennial workers. | Mediated by organizational pride. |
| Chen & Wang (2025) | PLS-SEM, N=530 tech startups (Taiwan) | Flexible spatial work enhances creative OCB and peer knowledge sharing. | Mediated by team psychological safety. |


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|---|---|---|---|
| Desmond & Miller (2026) | Quantitative survey, N=610 public sector (UK) | Formal FWA policies increase compliance and civic virtue; informal FWAs drive altruistic OCB-I. | Moderated by policy clarity. |
| Evans et al. (2026) | Longitudinal study, N=420 logistics (Australia) | Sustained hybrid work models enhance 3-year employee engagement and retention. | Mediated by work-life integration. |

*Note: Summary of 16 peer-reviewed studies selected via PRISMA 2020 methodology (2021–2026).*

**Structural Equation Modeling Meta-Synthesis**

Synthesizing the empirical path coefficients across the quantitative SEM studies in the corpus reveals a clear structural pattern. Figure 3 presents the integrated SEM structural path model, showing standardized meta-analytic path coefficients. The direct relationship between FWAs and employee engagement is highly significant ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$), as is the link between FWAs and perceived autonomy ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$). In turn, employee engagement strongly predicts OCB-I ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$) and OCB-O ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.01$).

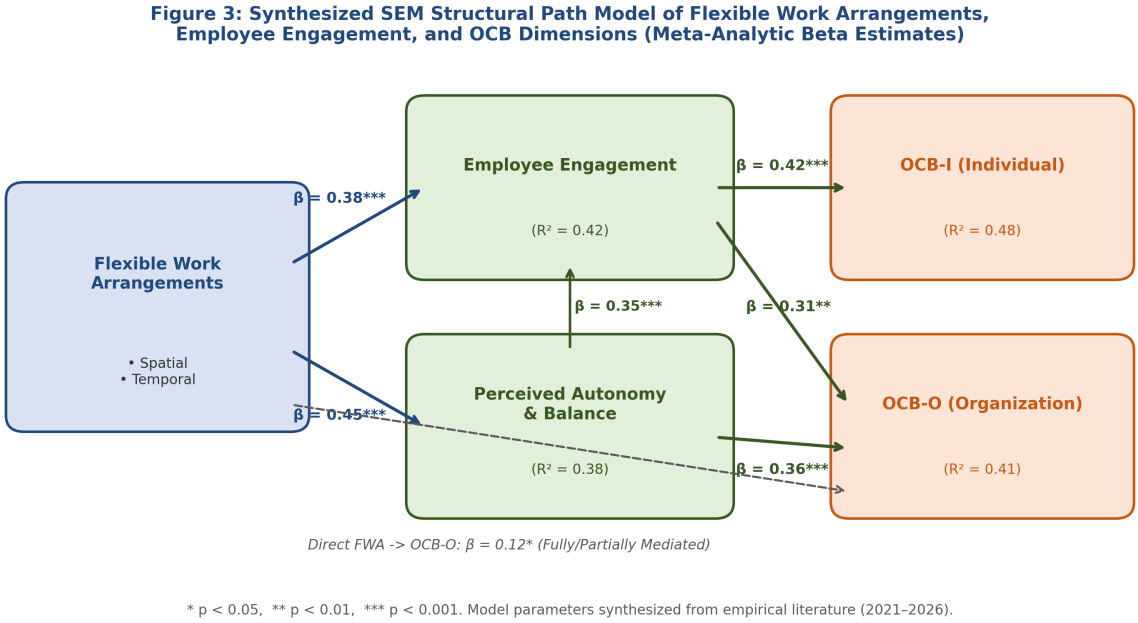



**Figure 3.** Meta-Synthesized Structural Equation Model (SEM) Linking FWAs, Mediating Constructs, and OCB Dimensions

**Critical Evaluation of Tensions and Research Gaps**

Despite consistent support for the positive impact of FWAs, critical review reveals three major structural tensions in current literature. First, the 'Autonomy-Flexibility Paradox' highlights that while FWAs increase scheduling control, spatial flexibility often leads to unregulated work extension and continuous availability pressure, resulting in boundary blurring and eventual burnout. Second, the 'Visibility-Citizenship Dilemma' shows that remote workers participating in spatial FWAs may experience reduced physical presence, leading managers to underestimate their OCB-O contributions compared to co-located peers. Third, the 'Equity-Implementation Gap' demonstrates that informal FWA allocation based on supervisor discretion can foster perceptions of favoritism and breach psychological contracts among ineligible employees. Table 3 evaluates these theoretical frameworks, mediating mechanisms, and future research gaps.


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**Table 3.** Critical Evaluation of Theoretical Perspectives, Paradoxes, and Future Research Agenda

| Theoretical Lens | Key Explanatory Mechanism | Identified Paradox / Tension | Unresolved Research Gap |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social Exchange Theory (SET) | Reciprocity norm where FWAs are viewed as POS, driving extra-role effort. | Over-reliance on formal exchange ignores emotional exhaustion and fatigue. | How socio-emotional contract breaches occur when FWAs are restricted or revoked. |
| Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) | FWAs function as job resources, buffering demands and activating engagement. | Autonomy paradox: excessive spatial flexibility creates new demands (technostress). | Longitudinal trajectories of engagement under permanent vs. rotating hybrid work. |
| Self-Determination Theory (SDT) | FWA fulfills autonomy and competence needs, driving intrinsic motivation. | Isolation dilemma: spatial distance can impair relatedness and peer OCB-I. | Cross-cultural differences in SDT need fulfillment across collectivistic vs. individualistic contexts. |

*Note: Synthesized from critical analysis of theoretical literature (2021–2026).*

## CONCLUSION

This critical review demonstrates that flexible work arrangements (FWAs) exert a profound, positive influence on employee engagement and organizational citizenship behavior. Rather than operating as simple perks, FWAs function as crucial job resources and indicators of organizational support that activate psychological autonomy, work-life balance, and affective commitment. These psychological states subsequently foster both in-role engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption) and extra-role citizenship behaviors (OCB-I and OCB-O).

However, maximizing the benefits of FWAs requires active managerial stewardship. Organizations cannot simply deploy spatial and temporal flexibility without establishing boundary management guidelines, digital communication etiquette, and supportive leadership practices. Without these safeguards, FWAs risk triggering work-life blurring, professional isolation, and evaluation biases. For HR practitioners, successful FWA governance involves three strategic imperatives: (1) establishing clear, transparent, and equitable FWA policies; (2) training supervisors in autonomy-supportive and outcome-based performance management; and (3) cultivating a culture of psychological safety and inclusion that recognizes and rewards citizenship behaviors regardless of employee work location.

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