Flexible Time, Flexible Location and Multidimensional Employee Performance: Evidence from Malaysian Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Flexible working arrangements are increasingly regarded as mechanisms of work design, yet their associations with distinct dimensions of employee performance may depend on job requirements. This study examines flexible location and flexible time under Universiti Selangor's output-based flexible work arrangement (AKABAH), drawing on 571 usable responses from 267 academic and 304 administrative employees (80.65% response rate). The questionnaire assessed self-reported productivity, perceived co-worker performance and role-specific adaptive performance. Descriptive analyses indicated relatively high ratings across these dimensions. Previously reported regressions using a composite productivity/performance outcome found positive associations for flexible location ($\beta = .123$, $p < .01$) and flexible time ($\beta = .089$, $p < .01$) in the full sample. Both aggregate associations were significant in the academic subgroup ($\beta = .192$ and .134, respectively), whereas neither was significant in the administrative subgroup ($\beta = .090$ and .026, respectively). These subgroup patterns are descriptive; no interaction or formal between-group coefficient test was estimated. Dimension-specific regressions are required to determine whether these aggregate relationships extend to personal productivity, perceived co-worker performance and role-specific adaptation. The findings offer context-sensitive evidence for aligning flexible work with task portability, coordination demands and service requirements; causal and dimension-specific inferences are not warranted from the analyses currently available.

Keywords: Flexible Work Arrangements, Flexible Time, Flexible Location, Employee Performance, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) have evolved from peripheral human resource benefits into a central concern in contemporary work design (Leonardi et al., 2024; Lamovšek et al., 2025). Digitalisation, post-pandemic expectations and hybrid work have weakened the assumption that productive work must occur at one place and time (Leonardi et al., 2024; Wang & Le, 2023). Current research distinguishes spatial flexibility, which concerns where work occurs, from temporal flexibility, which concerns when work is performed (Allen, Golden and Shockley, 2015; Harrop, Jiang, and Overall, 2026; Wang and Le, 2023). This distinction matters because time discretion may reduce scheduling conflict whereas location discretion can reduce commuting and protect concentration but can also change access to colleagues, customers, systems and physical resources (Allen et al., 2015; Leonardi et al., 2024).

The Malaysian institutional context makes this distinction especially relevant (Ministry of Human Resources Malaysia, 2024). Amendments to the Employment Act 1955 formally recognise employees' ability to apply for flexible arrangements involving hours, days or place of work (Employment Act 1955, ss. 60P–60Q). The legal framework does not establish that every role can or should be performed remotely; rather, it creates a formal basis for considering flexibility alongside contractual and organisational requirements (Employment Act 1955, ss. 60P–60Q). This policy development increases the need for organisation-level evidence about

which forms of flexibility are compatible with performance, particularly in service-intensive institutions where jobs differ sharply in their dependence on physical presence (Allen et al., 2015; Lamovšek et al., 2025).

Higher education provides a useful context because universities encompass heterogeneous work systems (Sharafizad et al., 2011). Academic roles combine scheduled teaching and student contact with relatively autonomous research, assessment and scholarly administration. Administrative roles frequently require office systems, service counters, records management, inter-unit coordination and predictable service hours. Evidence suggests that access to and use of flexible work differ by job type (Sharafizad et al., 2011). Consequently, an institution-wide estimate can obscure differences in work arrangements and associated performance outcomes (Lamovšek et al., 2025).

Universiti Selangor (UNISEL) introduced Aturan Kerja Anjal Berdasarkan Hasil (AKABAH), or an Output-Based Flexible Work Arrangement, as an organisational approach that allows flexibility in time and location while retaining accountability for agreed work outcomes and key performance indicators. The underlying logic is not simply "work from home"; it is a shift from attendance as the dominant signal of effort towards a more output-oriented approach to performance. The source study therefore measured both Flexible location and Flexible time and examined their relationship with productivity and employee well-being. For performance, the survey went beyond a single global score and operationalised three dimensions: self-productivity, perceived co-worker performance and adaptive performance. Adaptive performance items were role-specific, allowing academic and administrative respondents to be assessed against different forms of adjustment required in their work (Pulakos et al., 2000; Charbonnier-Voirin & Roussel, 2012).

A multidimensional approach is warranted because flexible work can affect performance through different mechanisms (Koopmans et al., 2011; Lamovšek et al., 2025). Strong individual output can coexist with coordination delays; reliable colleagues may nevertheless face challenges adapting to new technologies or procedures (Pulakos et al., 2000; Leonardi et al., 2024). Individual work performance is not a unitary construct (Koopmans et al., 2011), and adaptive performance is especially relevant when working methods and organisational expectations change (Pulakos et al., 2000). Consequently, evaluating an output-based flexibility policy solely through an aggregate productivity measure risks concealing dimension-specific associations.

The empirical literature is broadly supportive of flexible work but evidence is conditional (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; Çivilidağ & Durmaz, 2024). Earlier reviews reported favourable outcomes associated with flexible working and telecommuting, while emphasising the importance of context, intensity, definitions and implementation (de Menezes and Kelliher, 2011; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007). More recent evidence includes a randomised trial in which hybrid working improved retention without damaging performance (Bloom, Han, and Liang, 2024); research linking work-from-anywhere arrangements to productivity gains in suitable knowledge work (Choudhury, Foroughi, and Larson, 2021); and a review reporting a positive association between FWAs and employee performance (Çivilidağ and Durmaz, 2024). Harrop et al. (2026), synthesising evidence from 113 studies involving 88,618 participants, reported that outcomes differed by type of FWA.. Flexible work should therefore not be treated as one homogeneous intervention (Harrop et al., 2026).

This study addresses three gaps. First, it provides evidence from Malaysian higher education, where academic and administrative employees operate under one institutional flexible-work policy. Second, it distinguishes temporal flexibility from spatial flexibility rather than combining them into a single arrangement (Wang & Le, 2023). Third, it describes self-reported productivity, perceived co-worker performance and role-specific adaptive performance as distinct outcomes (Koopmans et al., 2011; Pulakos et al., 2000). The currently available regression results concern an aggregate productivity/performance outcome; separate outcome models are specified below as the additional analysis needed to test the multidimensional proposition directly. Occupational subgroup results are interpreted descriptively, not as evidence of moderation.

RESEARCH PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND QUESTION

The study examines associations between flexible location, flexible time and employee performance under an output-based flexible work system. Specifically, it aims to (1) describe flexible work patterns and three

performance dimensions; (2) assess the relationships of the two flexibility dimensions with an aggregate productivity/performance outcome; (3) specify separate regression tests for self-productivity, perceived co-worker performance and role-specific adaptive performance; and (4) describe academic and administrative subgroup patterns without claiming formal moderation. The guiding question is: How are flexible location and flexible time associated with the aggregate productivity/performance outcome in this institution, and what descriptive patterns in work arrangements and performance dimensions are observed across occupational groups?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Flexible Working Arrangements: Temporal and Spatial Flexibility

Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) provide employees with discretion over structural features of work (Allen et al., 2015). Although labels such as Flexible time, telework, remote work, hybrid work and work from anywhere overlap, contemporary frameworks distinguish temporal and spatial flexibility (Wang & Le, 2023; Harrop et al., 2026). Wang and Le (2023) classify FWAs through spatial mobility, temporal discretion and freedom from direct supervision, while Harrop et al. (2026) distinguish flextime, flexplace and combined forms. This paper defines flexible time as discretion over when work is performed and flexible location as discretion over where it is performed (Wang & Le, 2023). The questionnaire measures reported work patterns across time periods and locations; these frequency measures do not directly establish the extent of employees' discretion.

Flexible time changes the temporal architecture of work (Wang & Le, 2023). It can allow employees to adjust start and finish times, distribute effort around periods of high concentration, accommodate personal responsibilities, or perform certain tasks beyond conventional office hours (Allen et al., 2015). Theoretical arguments for positive performance effects centre on autonomy and resource allocation (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Employees can align demanding cognitive tasks with periods of high energy, reduce avoidable time conflict and respond to work peaks more selectively (Allen et al., 2015). In knowledge intensive work, this discretion can be particularly valuable because the relationship between hours physically spent at a workstation and useful output is weak (Choudhury et al., 2021). However, temporal flexibility can also create coordination costs if colleagues are unavailable at the same time, if service operations require common coverage, or if flexibility extends work into evenings and erodes recovery (Allen et al., 2015; Leonardi et al., 2024). Therefore, the value of flexi-time depends on whether individual discretion can coexist with synchronisation requirements (Lamovšek et al., 2025).

Flexible location changes the spatial architecture of work. Remote or hybrid work may reduce commuting, protect concentration time and expand employees' choice of a work environment suited to a particular task (Allen et al., 2015; Choudhury et al., 2021). Meta-analytic and review evidence generally identifies autonomy as an important mechanism explaining favourable telework outcomes (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007; Allen et al., 2015). Choudhury et al. (2021) further showed that geographic flexibility can improve output in work that is digitally enabled and measurable.

More recent experimental evidence is important because it reduces concerns about self-selection: Bloom et al. (2024) found that a hybrid arrangement did not damage employee performance while significantly improving retention (Bloom et al., 2024). At the same time, fully generalising these results would be careless (Anakpo et al., 2023). Work from home outcomes vary with occupation, organisational support, home conditions, technology and the design of the arrangement (Anakpo, Nqwayibana, and Mishi, 2023).

Availability and actual use of flexibility should also be distinguished. Employees may value access even when use is infrequent because availability provides a sense of control for exceptional demands (Harrop et al., 2026). Harrop et al. (2026) found systematic differences between FWA availability and use of FWAs among types of flexibility. Frequency should therefore not be interpreted as the dose of a universally beneficial intervention (Harrop et al., 2026). High office attendance can coexist with meaningful flexibility when alternative locations

are available for suitable tasks, as frequent morning work can coexist with temporal discretion when work can be redistributed when academically or operationally appropriate (Allen et al., 2015).

Multidimensional Employee Performance and the Conditions Shaping Flexible Work Outcomes

Individual work performance encompasses distinguishable behaviours and outcomes, whereas productivity is often used as a broad shorthand (Koopmans et al., 2011). Flexible-work studies operationalise performance using diverse measures, including output indicators, supervisor ratings and self-assessments (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011). This study therefore distinguishes three respondent-reported dimensions. Self-productivity refers to employees' assessment of their own effective and timely work output. In the questionnaire administered for the 2026 UNISEL AKABAH research project, the ten items cover task completion, targets, productivity outside the office, focus, responsiveness, errors, interruptions, time use, reachability and communication. The questionnaire is identified here as the study-specific AKABAH instrument; its original development documentation and any validation evidence should be supplied by the research team before publication. As a self-reported measure, it captures perceived effectiveness rather than independently verified output.

Perceived co-worker performance provides a relational or team-facing perspective based on respondents' assessment of their colleagues (Koopmans et al., 2011; Leonardi et al., 2024). The instrument asks whether they perceive that colleagues deliver outputs on time, complete work according to agreed schedules, have outputs ready when the team needs them, remain accountable without close supervision, contribute outputs that allow the team to progress, avoid unnecessary delay and take responsibility for assigned work. This respondent perceived dimension is important because flexible work changes not only individual routines but also the dependencies between employees (Leonardi et al., 2024). A policy could increase individual concentration yet damage team throughput if coordination, hand-offs or shared accountability deteriorate (Lamovšek et al., 2025). Conversely, high perceived co-worker performance would indicate, from respondents' perspective, that distributed work is not being experienced as a breakdown in collective reliability (Leonardi et al., 2024).

Adaptive performance concerns employees' responses to unfamiliar or changing demands (Pulakos et al., 2000; Charbonnier-Voirin & Roussel, 2012). The present questionnaire uses role-specific item sets. Academic items cover updating disciplinary knowledge, teaching strategies and technology, professional development, research, scholarly writing, grants and additional responsibilities. Administrative items cover changing procedures, digital systems, skill development, reprioritisation, unexpected problems, service needs, unfamiliar duties, interdepartmental collaboration and continuous improvement. These two scales should not be treated as interchangeable without psychometric evidence supporting comparability.

Flexible work may relate differently to these three dimensions (Lamovšek et al., 2025). Spatial discretion may protect focused individual work but yield smaller benefits when tasks depend on shared systems or in-person service. Temporal discretion may facilitate learning and reprioritisation but complicate coordination where colleagues require synchronous availability. Perceived co-worker performance may depend especially on communication protocols and clearly defined interdependencies (Leonardi et al., 2024). These possibilities motivate separate outcome models rather than assuming that a composite measure represents every aspect of performance.

Higher education evidence reinforces the need to consider work roles. Research has reported variation in flexible-work access and satisfaction across university job categories (Sharafizad et al., 2011). Academic roles combine some location-flexible tasks with fixed teaching obligations and substantial workload. Malaysian qualitative evidence highlights workload, time management and work–life pressures among academics (Ramachandaran et al., 2024). Recent findings also suggest that engagement and technological support shape flexible-work experiences among lecturers (Arifah et al., 2025). Administrative roles can be more constrained by service hours, records, facilities and coordinated operational processes.

Mixed findings do not justify abandoning flexibility; they require better specification (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011). Earlier reviews questioned a universal business case whereas recent syntheses report stronger positive relationships (de Menezes and Kelliher ,2011; Çivilidağ and Durmaz, 2024; Harrop et al., 2026). These positions are compatible if flexibility is treated as a job resource whose value depends on implementation and work design (Allen et al., 2015; Lamovšek et al., 2025). The useful question is therefore which form of flexibility fits which tasks, coordination conditions and performance dimensions, rather than whether flexible work works in the abstract (Harrop et al., 2026)

Flexibility is both an employee preference and an organisational capability (Leonardi et al., 2024). Beyond attraction and retention, performance depends on access to systems, communication norms, measurable deliverables and clarity about when synchronous work is required (Leonardi et al., 2024; Lamovšek et al., 2025). Accordingly, managers should evaluate which tasks and workflows are suited to location or schedule discretion, rather than assigning the same pattern to everyone with a similar job title.

Coordination is central to co-worker performance (Leonardi et al., 2024). Flexible work can create local optimisation when arrangements improve individual concentration but impose response delays on colleagues (Lamovšek et al., 2025). Team performance then depends on overlap windows, handoff protocols and work status visibility (Leonardi et al., 2024). Effective flexible work therefore standardises inside autonomy: employees may vary location and some timing but remain bound by deadlines, service windows, synchronous meetings and response norms (Leonardi et al., 2024). This logic is consistent with Management by Objectives (MBO), because autonomy over working methods is coupled with clear objectives (Drucker, 1954). If self-reported productivity is high while perceived co-worker performance is low, flexibility may be shifting rather than reducing coordination costs (Leonardi et al., 2024).

Routine performance and adaptability should be examined separately (Pulakos et al., 2000). A flexible arrangement may sustain familiar tasks without necessarily improving employees' responses to new technologies, procedures or unexpected demands. Academic adaptation may involve teaching platforms, research approaches and accreditation requirements; administrative adaptation may concern digital systems, operational processes and service models. Because the questionnaire uses role-specific items, the interpretation of adaptive performance must remain anchored to each occupational group.

Visibility creates a further governance challenge (Leonardi et al., 2024). Office-based management can rely on presence as an informal indicator of effort, whereas flexible work reduces direct observation even when outputs are maintained. Previous telecommuting and hybrid-work research has found that performance need not deteriorate under such arrangements (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Bloom et al., 2024). An output-based system can address this challenge through explicit deliverables, provided objectives are clear and results can be evaluated reliably (Drucker, 1954).

Flexible Work in Higher Education: Malaysian Context and Research Gap

The Malaysian higher education setting combines knowledge-intensive work with campus-based services. Within one institution, research and teaching coexist with student transactions, finance, records, facilities and governance. These activities differ in portability, scheduling constraints and interdependence. Malaysian academics also report workload and time-management pressures (Ramachandaran et al., 2024). Consequently, work undertaken at night should not automatically be interpreted as beneficial temporal flexibility; it may instead indicate work intensification or blurred work–non-work boundaries.

The relevant comparison is not necessarily remote work versus office attendance. Contemporary flexible arrangements may combine locations and time patterns, and research indicates that combinations of temporal and spatial flexibility can have distinctive outcomes (Harrop et al., 2026). In universities, campus presence may suit teaching, student services and collaborative problem-solving, whereas alternative locations may support writing, analysis and other concentrated activities. A defensible policy therefore matches work arrangements to tasks rather than maximising time spent away from the office.

Recent higher education and Malaysian studies report generally favourable but conditional FWA and performance relationships, with work engagement, work–life balance, technology, task variety and organisational support shaping outcomes (Arifah et al., 2025; Eshun & Segbenya, 2024; Ismail & Michael, 2025; Mat Desa & Abu Hassan Asaari, 2025; Abu Bakar et al., 2025; Naqshbandi et al., 2025; Wilda et al., 2026). However, they do not simultaneously separate temporal and spatial flexibility, retain multidimensional performance indicators, and compare academic with administrative staff under one institutional policy (Arifah et al., 2025; Eshun & Segbenya, 2024; Naqshbandi et al., 2025). This study therefore adds a within institution test of job-based flexibility rather than another general test of whether FWAs are beneficial (Çivilidağ & Durmaz, 2024; Harrop et al., 2026).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

The conceptual framework distinguishes flexible location and flexible time as predictor constructs and self-productivity, perceived co-worker performance and adaptive performance as separate outcome dimensions (Koopmans et al., 2011; Pulakos et al., 2000). Job category provides context for descriptive subgroup analyses. Although role differences are theoretically plausible, this study did not estimate interaction terms or statistically test equality of subgroup coefficients. Therefore, occupational category is not treated as an empirically established moderator.

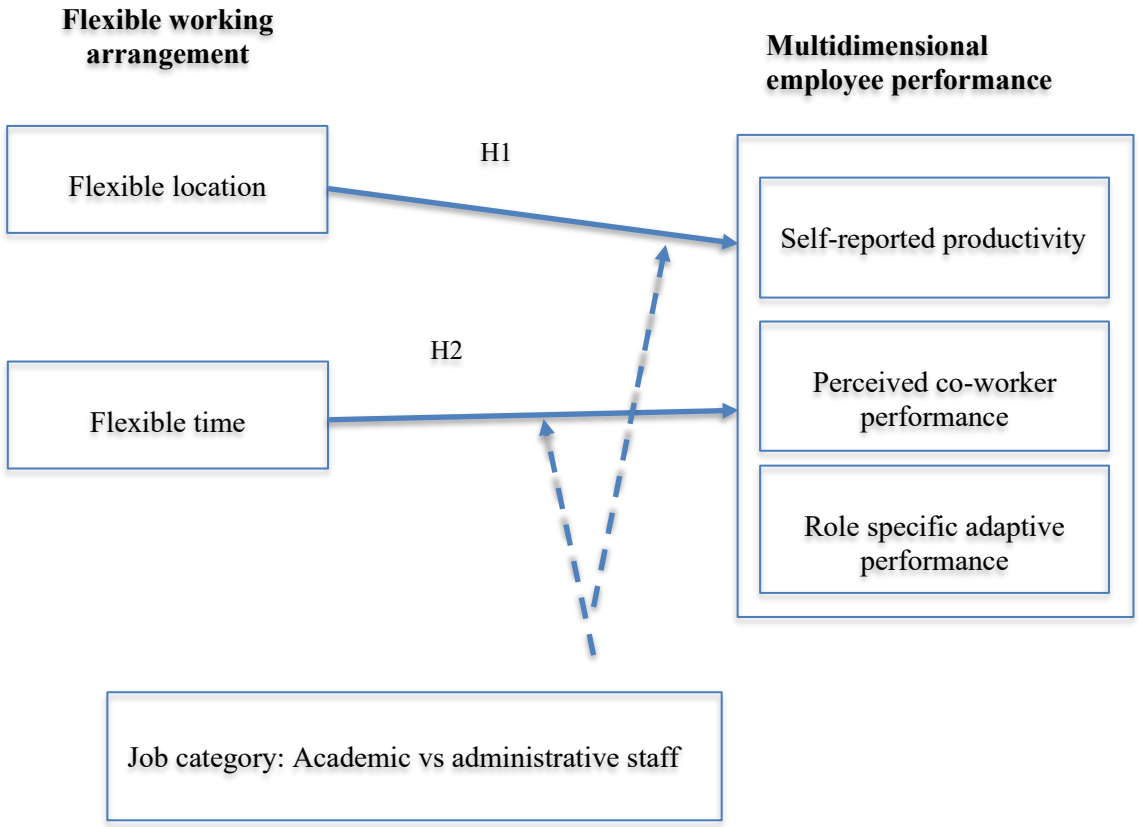
The model is developed through three complementary theoretical lenses. The Job Demands Resources (JD-R) model provides the primary performance mechanism, Management by Objectives (MBO) provides the accountability logic, and work/family border theory provides the boundary perspective (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Drucker, 1954; Clark, 2000; Prodanova & Kocarev, 2021). Together, these lenses explain how flexibility may support performance and why its value can differ across job categories (Harrop et al., 2026; Wang & Le, 2023; Bakker et al., 2023). From the JD-R perspective, Flexible location and Flexible time can function as job resources because they increase control over where and when effort is deployed (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli, 2001; Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Spatial discretion can reduce commuting and provide task-appropriate concentration environments, while temporal discretion can reduce schedule conflict and allow demanding work to be aligned with periods of greater capacity (Harrop et al., 2026; Wang & Le, 2023; Prodanova & Kocarev, 2021). However, flexibility can also create additional demands through coordination difficulties, technology friction, isolation or after hours work (Demerouti et al., 2001; Harrop et al., 2026; Wang & Le, 2023; Prodanova & Kocarev, 2021; Bakker et al., 2023). Its performance value therefore depends on resource demand fit rather than the amount of flexibility alone (Demerouti et al., 2001; Harrop et al., 2026; Prodanova & Kocarev, 2021).

MBO links flexibility to accountability through agreed objectives and results rather than continuous observation of activity (Drucker, 1954; Mat Desa & Abu Hassan Asaari, 2025). Under AKABAH, the relevant performance question is whether employees deliver agreed outputs, maintain service quality and meet performance targets, rather than whether their effort is continuously visible (Drucker, 1954; Harrop et al., 2026; Prodanova & Kocarev, 2021). This logic is particularly relevant to self-reported productivity and perceived co-worker performance because flexible work requires clear, measurable and time-bounded outputs, including clarity about what interdependent team members must deliver, to whom and by when (Harrop et al., 2026; Prodanova & Kocarev, 2021). Where objectives are vague, managers have a weaker basis for evaluating performance and flexibility can be interpreted as a supervision problem (Harrop et al., 2026; Prodanova & Kocarev, 2021).

Work/family border theory explains the temporal and spatial boundary implications of flexibility (Clark, 2000). Flexible time and Flexible location alter the permeability and flexibility of boundaries between work and non-work domains (Clark, 2000; Harrop et al., 2026; Prodanova & Kocarev, 2021). Greater boundary control can help employees to manage competing demands, whereas excessive permeability can allow work to extend into personal time, disrupt attention, recovery and work scheduling (Clark, 2000; Harrop et al., 2026; Prodanova & Kocarev, 2021). This mechanism is contingent because academics generally have greater discretion over non-teaching work, while administrative employees are more strongly anchored to formal operating hours and physical service requirements (Harrop et al., 2026; Prodanova & Kocarev, 2021).

Taken together, the model treats Flexible location and Flexible time as distinct work design resources associated with multidimensional employee performance (Koopmans et al., 2011). Self-reported productivity, perceived co-worker performance and adaptive performance provide complementary performance dimensions (Pulakos et al., 2000). The three theoretical lenses locate these relationships within resource demand fit, output accountability and boundary control, while job category provides the role contingent interpretation because academic and administrative work differ in task portability, temporal synchronisation, physical presence requirements and service interdependence (Arifah et al., 2025; Eshun & Segbenya, 2024; Naqshbandi et al., 2025). The model therefore does not assume that Flexible location and Flexible time have identical performance relationships across all jobs. Their practical value depends on the fit among the form of flexibility, work demands, accountability requirements, work boundaries and role context (Harrop et al., 2026; Wang & Le, 2023; Prodanova & Kocarev, 2021). Figure 1 summarises the proposed relationships and theoretical interpretation.

Figure 1: Conceptual model of flexible time, flexible location and multidimensional employee performance



Note. Solid arrows represent H1 and H2. Job category is a role contingent grouping condition because the available analysis uses separate academic and administrative subgroup regressions rather than a formal interaction test.

Flexible work location should be positively associated with performance when employees can select settings that fit task requirements (Bloom et al., 2024; Toscano et al., 2025; Allen et al., 2026). For self-productivity, the mechanism is direct: portable work can be completed in environments that reduce unnecessary interruption and commuting (Koopmans et al., 2011; Çivilidağ & Durmaz, 2024). For co-worker performance, the expected relationship depends on whether communication systems and norms preserve collective accountability (Koopmans et al., 2011; Çivilidağ & Durmaz, 2024). For adaptive performance, spatial flexibility can require and enable employees to develop new routines, use digital systems and reorganise work (Pulakos et al., 2000; Liao et al., 2024). The expectation is therefore positive overall, while the strength may vary by role and dimension. (Liao et al., 2024; Naqshbandi et al., 2025)

H1: Flexible work location is positively associated with employee performance.

Flexible working time should also be positively associated with performance when temporal discretion allows employees to match work to periods of concentration, manage fixed obligations and respond to changing priorities (Boltz et al., 2023; Harrop et al., 2026). Self-productivity may benefit from protected time for complex tasks (Koopmans et al., 2011; Çivilidağ & Durmaz, 2024).

Co-worker performance can benefit when flexible schedules extend useful coverage, although excessive dispersion may reduce overlap (Koopmans et al., 2011; Çivilidağ & Durmaz, 2024). Adaptive performance may benefit because employees can reorganise work around changing demands (Pulakos et al., 2000; Liao et al., 2024). Again, the expected direction is positive, but job requirements may constrain the relationship. (Liao et al., 2024; Naqshbandi et al., 2025).

H2: Flexible working time is positively associated with employee performance.

Finally, the JD-R argument implies that the resource value of flexibility depends on job characteristics (Wang et al., 2021; Prodanova & Kocarev, 2021; Naqshbandi et al., 2024). Academic tasks are, on average, more portable and temporally heterogeneous than many administrative service tasks (Wang et al., 2021; Harrop et al., 2026). Administrative work may therefore require stronger synchronisation and presence even when selected tasks can be completed flexibly (Wang et al., 2021; Harrop et al., 2026). This leads to an occupational contingency expectation. (Naqshbandi et al., 2024; Eshun & Segbenya, 2024; Gutman et al., 2024; Arifah et al., 2025)

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional census survey design in a Malaysian private university implementing an output-based flexible working arrangement. The arrangement allowed variation in work location and working time while retaining expectations concerning work outputs and organisational responsibilities. The design enabled examination of associations across a large organisational population at a defined stage of policy implementation.

The unit of analysis was the individual employee. Academic and administrative employees were included because both groups operated under the same institutional arrangement but performed different types of work, allowing comparison within a common employer and policy environment while recognising differences in job characteristics.

The questionnaire included demographic information and distinct sections for work location, working time, self-reported productivity, perceived co-worker performance and role-specific adaptive performance. The original questionnaire was administered within the 2026 UNISEL AKABAH institutional research project identified in the Acknowledgements. The research team should provide the instrument's original documentation, development/adaptation procedures, scoring protocol and reliability evidence before publication.

Flexible location (BL) included four frequency items on office, home, alternative-location and hybrid work; flexible time (CW) included four items on morning, midday, afternoon and night work. Responses used a five-point frequency scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). Importantly, frequencies of attending the office or working in the morning are not automatically equivalent to employee discretion, and the construct labels should be interpreted with this measurement qualification.

Employee performance was assessed using five-point agreement scales and comprised three dimensions. Self-reported productivity (GPROD) consisted of ten items reflecting personal output, timeliness, responsiveness and focus, while perceived co-worker performance (HKRS) comprised seven items assessing team timeliness, accountability and dependable outputs. Adaptive performance was measured using separate ten item sections for academic and administrative employees. Academic adaptive performance (ISA) addressed activities

associated with teaching, research, scholarly writing, professional development and academic responsibilities, whereas administrative adaptive performance (JADA) focused more strongly on work procedures, digital systems, skill development, problem solving and service improvement. These measurement characteristics are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Measurement and Operationalisation of Study Constructs

Construct	Code	Items	Role/content
Flexi-location	BL	4	Office, home, outside location, hybrid
Flexi-time	CW	4	Morning, midday, afternoon, night
Self-productivity	GPROD	10	Personal output, timeliness, responsiveness, focus
Co-worker performance	HKRS	7	Team timeliness, accountability, dependable outputs
Adaptive performance	ISA	10	Academic role: teaching, research and scholarly adaptation
Adaptive performance	JADA	10	Administrative role: procedures, digital systems, service adaptation

Because academic and administrative adaptive-performance questionnaires contain different items, the two scales cannot be assumed to be psychometrically equivalent. Descriptive statistics for adaptive performance are therefore reported separately for each role (ISA for academics; JADA for administrative employees); separate regression analyses remain outstanding. A pooled adaptive-performance coefficient or direct between-role mean comparison would require evidence of measurement comparability, potentially through appropriate common-item measurement invariance or another justified harmonisation procedure.

The existing analysis comprises descriptive statistics, occupational comparisons and regressions predicting an aggregate productivity/performance outcome from flexible-location and flexible-time indicators. To evaluate the multidimensional framework directly, the required supplementary analysis consists of separate multiple regressions for GPROD and HKRS in the full sample, and distinct ISA and JADA regressions within the academic and administrative subgroups, respectively. Each specification should include both aggregate flexibility predictors simultaneously, report sample size, unstandardised and standardised coefficients, standard errors, confidence intervals, exact p values and model R^2/adjusted R^2, and assess multicollinearity and residual diagnostics. Composite construction and reliability should be verified before estimation. These new models cannot be estimated from the manuscript's published summary statistics and must be run on the respondent-level dataset. No unreported coefficients are inferred here. Separate subgroup coefficients may be presented descriptively, but significance in one group and nonsignificance in another does not establish a significant group difference; formal moderation would require interaction terms or a valid coefficient-difference test.

RESULTS

The target population comprised 708 eligible employees across the university's two principal campuses, including 330 academics and 378 administrative staff. A census survey approach was used rather than probability sampling because the full eligible workforce was invited to participate. A total of 571 usable responses were obtained, comprising 267 academics and 304 administrative employees, producing an overall response rate of 80.65 percent. The response rates were 80.91 percent for academic staff and 80.42 percent for administrative staff. The high and closely matched response rates indicate broad participation and similar response proportions across the two occupational groups; however, they do not rule out non-response bias.

Flexible location and flexible time patterns

Across all 571 respondents, combining academic and administrative staff, office work remained the most frequently reported work location (Mean = 4.23, Std Dev = 0.956), as shown in Table 2. Hybrid work, referring to a combination of working from home and the office, was moderate (Mean = 2.65, Std Dev = 1.358), as was home working (Mean = 2.52, Std Dev = 1.134), while outside or alternative location work was lower (Mean = 2.09, Std Dev = 0.982). The aggregate flexible location score for the combined sample was moderate (Mean = 2.42, Std Dev = 0.966). These results indicate that respondents worked across several locations, although office-based work remained the most frequently reported pattern. The relatively higher standard deviation for hybrid work also suggests greater variation among employees in the extent to which a home and office arrangement was used.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Flexible Location Patterns by Staff

Flexible location pattern	Academic & Administrative		Academic		Administrative	
	Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev
Office	4.23	0.956	3.89	0.824	4.54	0.960
Home	2.52	1.134	3.23	0.834	1.90	0.988
Outside location	2.09	0.982	2.46	0.859	1.77	0.971
Hybrid (home and office)	2.65	1.358	3.55	0.966	1.87	1.153

Table 2 shows a substantial difference in the use of flexible locations. Academic employees reported substantially more home working (M = 3.23), hybrid home and office work (M = 3.55), and outside location work (M = 2.46) than administrative employees, whose respective means were 1.90, 1.87, and 1.77. Conversely, administrative employees reported considerably more office work (M = 4.54) than academic employees (M = 3.89). Thus, the moderate overall means for home and hybrid work should not be interpreted as representing a uniform level of spatial flexibility across the workforce.

Respondents reported working during several periods of the day, with morning work occurring most frequently. As presented in Table 3, morning work was very frequent across the combined academic and administrative sample (Mean= 4.67, Std Dev = 0.684), followed by afternoon work (Mean = 3.81, Std Dev = 1.339) and midday work (Mean = 3.69, Std Dev = 1.333). Night work was moderate (Mean= 2.53, Std Dev = 1.239). The aggregate flexible time score for the combined sample was high (Mean = 3.75, Std Dev = 1.265). These findings describe the distribution of work across time periods and locations, but do not establish how much discretion employees exercised over their schedules or work locations.

Morning remained the dominant working period, but the relatively high midday and afternoon means, together with the use of night work, indicate that working activity extended across different periods of the day rather than being concentrated exclusively within a single conventional time period. The pattern suggests that academic work was distributed more widely across the day, whereas administrative work was more strongly concentrated in the morning and conventional organisational working periods.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Flexible Time Patterns by Staff Category

Flexible time pattern	Academic & Administrative		Academic		Administrative	
	Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev
Morning	4.67	0.684	4.60	0.666	4.73	0.695
Midday	3.69	1.333	3.86	1.048	3.54	1.526

Afternoon	3.81	1.339	3.97	1.042	3.67	1.542
Night	2.53	1.239	3.04	1.110	2.07	1.167

Taken together, the flexible location and flexible time results indicate a controlled flexible system rather than a predominantly remote workforce. Spatial flexibility was selective and differed substantially between occupational groups, while temporal flexibility was more widely evident across the workforce. Under the same institutional policy, reported work patterns differed descriptively by occupational role, with academic employees reporting work across a wider range of locations and time periods and administrative employees reporting more office-based work within conventional working periods.

Multidimensional performance

Performance was high across the measured dimensions, as shown in Table 4. For the combined sample of academic and administrative employees, mean self-reported productivity was 4.27 (SD = 0.545), while mean perceived co-worker performance was 4.11 (SD = 0.662). Among academic employees, self-reported productivity was 4.37 (Std Dev = 0.524), perceived co-worker performance was 4.14 (Std Dev = 0.634), and adaptive performance was 3.85 (Std Dev = 0.546). Among administrative employees, the corresponding means were 4.19 (Std Dev = 0.549), 4.08 (Std Dev = 0.686), and 4.07 (Std Dev = 0.526), respectively. Overall, the results indicate that strong self-assessed output coexisted with positive assessments of colleagues and high role-specific adaptability.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Employee Performance Dimensions by Staff Category

Performance dimension	**Academic & Administrative**		**Academic**		**Administrative**	
Performance dimension	**Mean**	**Std Dev**	**Mean**	**Std Dev**	**Mean**	**Std Dev**
Self-reported productivity	4.27	0.545	4.37	0.524	4.19	0.549
Perceived co-worker performance	4.11	0.662	4.14	0.634	4.08	0.686
Adaptive performance	-	-	3.85	0.546	4.07	0.526

Note. Aggregate values are reported for self-reported productivity and perceived co-worker performance. Adaptive performance

is role-specific and was measured using different item sets for academic and administrative staff; therefore, a pooled aggregate mean and standard deviation are not reported.

Table 4 shows high performance across both groups, with self-reported productivity rated highest. Academic staff reported slightly higher self-productivity and perceived co-worker performance. Adaptive performance was also high for both groups, but because different role-specific measures were used, the academic and administrative means should be interpreted separately rather than directly compared.

Hypothesis Testing

The available hypothesis tests concern the previously reported aggregate productivity/performance outcome. Tables 5–7 reproduce those reported associations and should not be read as tests of the three performance dimensions independently. The required dimension-specific models are identified in Table 8 as analyses awaiting respondent-level estimation. Consequently, H1 and H2 are supported only in relation to the reported aggregate outcome; their applicability to GPROD, HKRS, ISA and JADA remains unresolved. H3 is exploratory and cannot be accepted or rejected from separate subgroup significance patterns.

As shown in Table 5, H1 predicted that flexible work location would be positively associated with employee performance. For the full sample of 571 respondents, comprising both academic and administrative

employees, aggregate flexible location was positively associated with productivity/performance (β = 0.123, p < .01). At item level, home work (β = 0.107, p < .01) and hybrid home and office work (β = 0.108, p < .01) were significant, while office and outside location work were not. Among academic employees, the aggregate association was positive and statistically significant (β = 0.192, p < .01), as were the associations for home, outside-location and hybrid work. In contrast, aggregate flexible location was not significant for administrative employees (β = 0.090), although office, home and hybrid work showed significant positive associations. The subgroup estimates show descriptive variation in the associations between work location and the aggregate productivity/performance outcome; a formal interaction or coefficient-difference test is required to establish whether these associations differ statistically by occupational role.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients for Aggregate and Individual Flexible Location Patterns

Flexible location predictor	Academic & Administrative (β)	Academic (β)	Administrative (β)
Flexible location (aggregate)	0.123**	0.192**	0.090
Office	0.074	-1.92	0.211**
Home	0.107**	0.175**	0.097**
Outside location	0.051	0.143**	-0.019
Hybrid (home and office)	0.108**	0.131**	0.133**

Note. **p < .01

Editorial verification required: Table 5 reports academic office-work β = −1.92. This coefficient has not been changed because the original statistical output was not supplied. Verify the value, coefficient type and significance coding before submission.

As presented in Table 6, H2 predicted that flexible working time would be positively associated with employee performance. The aggregate relationship was positive and significant for the full sample (β = 0.089, p < .01); thus, H2 was supported. The relationship was also significant for academic employees (β = 0.134, p < .01) but not for administrative employees (β = 0.026). At item level, morning and night work were significant for the full sample, all four time periods were significant for academic employees, and only morning work was significant for administrative employees. Within the academic subgroup, work frequency in each of the four time periods was significantly associated with the aggregate productivity/performance outcome; within the administrative subgroup, only morning work showed a significant association.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients for Aggregate and Individual Flexible Time Patterns

Flexible time predictor	Academic & Administrative (β)	Academic (β)	Administrative (β)
Aggregate flexible time	**.089****	**0.134****	0.026
Morning	0.122**	0.125**	0.128**
Midday	0.076	0.172**	0.025
Afternoon	0.065	0.121**	0.038
Night	0.090**	0.162**	0.048

Note. **p < .01

The reported aggregate outcome was positively associated with flexible location (β = .123, p < .01) and flexible time (β = .089, p < .01) in the full sample (Table 7). Both estimates were positive and statistically significant in the academic subgroup, whereas the corresponding administrative coefficients were not

statistically significant. These are within-group results. The manuscript does not report group-by-flexibility interactions or a direct coefficient-difference test; therefore, no statistically established difference between academic and administrative associations is claimed. The distinct performance dimensions remain to be assessed through the additional models specified in Table 8.

Table 7: Summary of Hypothesis decision and role-contingent findings

Statement	Evidence	Decision/interpretation
H1: Flexi-location → performance	Full sample β = 0.123**	Supported
H2: Flexi-time → performance	Full sample β = 0.089**	Supported
Academic role pattern	Location β = 0.192**; time β = 0.134**	Both forms of flexibility were significantly associated with performance
Administrative role pattern	Location β = 0.090; time β = 0.026	Aggregate associations were not statistically significant; selected location and time components were significantly associated with the aggregate productivity/performance outcome.

Note. **p < 0.01. (Role contingent findings are based on separate subgroup regressions and should not be interpreted as a formal moderation test).

DISCUSSION

The findings reinforce that flexible working arrangements should not be evaluated simply in terms of whether flexibility is "good" or "bad" for performance. Rather, the central issue is fit between the form of flexibility and the nature of the work. Across the university, flexible location and flexible time were performance relevant, but the patterns differed substantially between academic and administrative employees. This supports recent evidence that FWA outcomes depend on job characteristics, task design, organisational support and the specific form of flexibility provided (Allen et al., 2015; Anakpo et al., 2023; Çivilidağ & Durmaz, 2024; Harrop et al., 2026). The findings therefore support the study's job based perspective rather than a uniform FWA model.

For academic staff, greater spatial and temporal flexibility is consistent with the structure of academic work. Research, writing, assessment preparation, data analysis and some forms of student supervision are relatively portable and can often be completed asynchronously. Flexible location may therefore provide protected environments for cognitively demanding work, while flexible time allows employees to organise tasks around teaching schedules, meetings and periods of concentration. This interpretation is consistent with the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) model, in which control over work location and time can function as a resource when it helps employees meet work demands more effectively (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2023). It is also consistent with evidence that spatial flexibility can support performance where work is digitally enabled and outputs are portable (Choudhury et al., 2021; Bloom et al., 2024). However, academic flexibility should not be interpreted as encouragement for unrestricted working hours. The wider distribution of academic work across the day may reflect useful temporal autonomy, but it may also blur boundaries between work and personal time. Work/family border theory therefore provides an important qualification: flexibility is beneficial when it increases employees' control over boundaries, but it can become detrimental when work continuously extends into non-work time (Clark, 2000; Prodanova & Kocarev, 2021). For universities, flexible time should therefore mean discretion over when suitable work is completed, not an expectation of permanent availability.

Administrative work shows why a different FWA design is required. Many administrative functions depend on service hours, student and staff interaction, shared systems, approvals, records, hand-offs and real-time coordination. In such work, the resource value of flexibility can be constrained by the need for synchronisation and physical or virtual presence. The results nevertheless indicate that selected home and hybrid arrangements can coexist with effective performance. Thus, administrative work should not be classified as inherently unsuitable for flexibility; rather, flexibility should be targeted to tasks that can be performed without weakening service continuity or team coordination. This is consistent with Allen et al. (2015), Anakpo et al. (2023) and Harrop et al. (2026), who emphasise that remote and hybrid work outcomes depend strongly on work design and organisational conditions.

From a Management by Objectives (MBO) perspective, the high descriptive ratings for self-productivity, co-worker performance and adaptive performance are compatible with an output-based approach such as AKABAH (Drucker, 1954). However, high ratings alone do not demonstrate that flexibility caused these outcomes, nor do they establish significant predictor relationships for each dimension. Effective performance management should combine individual deliverables with responsiveness, collective coordination and role-specific adaptation, with objective indicators used where feasible.

THEORETICAL AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The principal conceptual contribution is the distinction between temporal and spatial flexibility in a work setting comprising both academic and administrative occupations (Harrop et al., 2026). The questionnaire also recognises individual output, perceived team dependability and role-specific adaptation as separate dimensions (Koopmans et al., 2011; Pulakos et al., 2000). Empirically, however, the current regressions support conclusions about an aggregate outcome only. Dimension-specific claims remain conditional on the supplementary analyses. The observed subgroup patterns are useful for developing task-fit propositions but do not establish occupational moderation. The Job Demands–Resources framework explains the potential resource value of discretion, MBO explains the role of output accountability and work/family border theory draws attention to boundary management (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Drucker, 1954; Clark, 2000).

For universities, the findings support a job- and task-based approach to flexible working arrangements rather than a uniform policy across academic and administrative staff. Academic work such as research, writing, assessment preparation and course development may permit greater spatial and temporal discretion, whereas teaching, student consultation, laboratories, meetings and other campus-based responsibilities require scheduled presence. Administrative flexibility should similarly be determined by task suitability while maintaining student services, process continuity, system access and sufficient staffing. This task based approach is consistent with evidence that flexible work outcomes depend on work design, task requirements and the structure of the arrangement (Bloom et al., 2024; Harrop et al., 2026).

Universities should therefore design structured hybrid arrangements rather than equating flexibility with unrestricted remote work. Faculties and administrative units can determine which activities require physical presence, synchronous interaction or shared resources and which can be performed effectively from alternative locations. For administrative functions in particular, common service hours, minimum staffing and clear hand off procedures are important for maintaining responsiveness and coordination. For academics, flexibility should remain aligned with teaching schedules, student accessibility and collegial responsibilities (Eshun & Segbenya, 2024; Arifah et al., 2025). Performance management should also reflect the nature of university work. Consistent with MBO, reduced physical visibility should be supported by clear outputs and accountability, but indicators should extend beyond individual deliverables to include timeliness, responsiveness, service quality and contribution to team workflows. This is particularly important where academic and administrative activities are interdependent and one employee's output affects the work of others.

Finally, universities should define fairness as equitable access to appropriate flexibility rather than identical flexibility for all staff. Decisions should be based on transparent criteria such as task portability, physical presence requirements, student and stakeholder interaction, service coverage, interdependence, information security and measurable outputs. From a JD-R and work/family border perspective, flexibility should provide useful control over work without weakening coordination or extending work unnecessarily into personal time (Clark, 2000; Prodanova & Kocarev, 2021; Harrop et al., 2026).

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Several limitations restrict the interpretation of these findings. First, the cross-sectional design does not establish causality, and the self-reported and respondent-perceived outcomes are susceptible to common-method and perceptual bias. Second, the regression results presently available use an aggregate productivity/performance outcome; associations with self-productivity (GPROD), perceived co-worker performance (HKRS), academic adaptive performance (ISA) and administrative adaptive performance (JADA) have not yet been estimated separately. These analyses are necessary before making dimension-specific inferential claims. Third, the academic–administrative comparisons are descriptive: the study fitted separate subgroup regressions but did not estimate job-category interaction terms, test differences between coefficients or establish moderation. A coefficient that is significant in one subgroup but not the other does not by itself demonstrate a between-group difference. Fourth, the adaptive-performance measures contain different role-specific items and should not be pooled or directly compared without additional psychometric justification. Fifth, the analysis relies on a single private university, limiting external generalisability. Further work should validate the AKABAH instrument, clarify how the composite scores were constructed, assess measurement reliability, undertake the separate outcome regressions, and where appropriate test occupational interactions using the respondent-level data. Longitudinal or quasi-experimental designs and objective performance indicators would strengthen causal interpretation and replication across institutions would improve generalisability.

CONCLUSION

Within this Malaysian private university, previously reported regressions indicate that flexible location and flexible time are positively associated with an aggregate respondent-reported productivity/performance outcome. Descriptive findings also show generally high self-productivity, perceived co-worker performance and role-specific adaptive performance, alongside distinctive academic and administrative work patterns. These descriptive dimensions must not be conflated with evidence that each dimension is independently predicted by flexibility; separate regression models are required. Likewise, differences in subgroup coefficients are not evidence of formal occupational moderation without interaction or coefficient-difference tests. Subject to these qualifications, the study motivates a task-sensitive approach to flexible work that preserves accountability, service continuity, coordination and appropriate work–non-work boundaries.

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Instrument source note: The questionnaire is attributed to the 2026 UNISEL AKABAH project. Before submission, the authors must confirm the original instrument authorship, date, item development or adaptation, and accessible source (if any). A fabricated journal citation must not be inserted in place of missing provenance. This manuscript draws on the 2026 Universiti Selangor research project “Kesan Aturan Kerja Anjal Berdasarkan Hasil (AKABAH) terhadap Kesejahteraan Pekerja, Produktiviti dan Penjimatan Sumber di UNISEL”, supported by the Universiti Selangor internal research grant GPD/AKABAH2026/UNISEL-26/SS/01.

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