

Revealing the Main Characteristics of Work Flexibility. An Empirical Analysis Based on Romanian Employees' Perspective

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Abstract

The paper aims to analyse the main characteristics of work flexibility in the Romanian companies using a sample of 220 employees, analysing the contractual, functional, wage and alike the working time flexibility.

The empirical results revealed that the main forms of work flexibility present in the Romanian companies are team work, computer usage and teleworking.

Among the main forms of work flexibility, working time flexibility and contractual flexibility are not much present in the Romanian organizations.

The functional flexibility relating on training of employees, according to the training needs of the company and on the working team autonomy is present into a small extent in the Romanian companies.

Among the main measures pointed out by the Romanian employees to increase the level of work flexibility, wage flexibility and working-time flexibility would be highly appreciated.

Key words: contractual flexibility, working time flexibility, wage flexibility, functional flexibility, Romanian employees

J.E.L. classification: J22, J81, O15, C83.

1. Introduction

Innovation, creativity and initiative are key conditions for ensuring performance in most current workplaces, and also are the incentives that motivate the new generations. These qualities require you to be proactive, to change your perspective, to discover new opportunities, to enrich your knowledge and abilities, to know new people, to change the fixed workstation by a dynamic one, using both spaces which facilitates collaboration or concentration as well as other types of unconventional areas from the perspective of traditional office spaces. With the promotion of teleworking law in Romania, homework has become a topic of interest in Romanian society.

In this context, the paper aims to analyse the main characteristics of work flexibility in the Romanian companies using a sample of 220 employees, analysing the contractual, functional, wage and alike the working time flexibility.

The paper is organized as follows. The second section is dedicated to the presentation of the most relevant studies regarding work flexibility, while the following section is dedicated to methodology and data. The section of empirical results is structured into two sub-sections: sample profile reflecting the main features of interviewed employees, the sub-section of the main characteristics of the work flexibility and the paper ends with the main conclusions.

2. Theoretical background

It is more than likely that the future reserves changes regarding the way of organizing the work, and that the traditional approach of 8 hours / day, 5 days per week could not provide anymore the necessary solutions in the dynamics of technological changes that many organizations are currently going through.

According to Kossek et al.(2011) and Kossek and Thompson (2015, p.12), there are “four types of workplace flexibility:

- (1) flexibility in scheduling;
- (2) flexibility in place/location;
- (3) flexibility in amount of work/workload and hours;
- (4) flexibility in leave periods and career continuity”.

Casuneanu(2013) identified four types of workplace flexibility: working time flexibility, contractual flexibility, functional flexibility and wage flexibility.

Working time flexibility refers mostly to: work with flexible working hours; part-time work; work in overtime; work outside normal working hours.

Contractual flexibility can be found in various flexible contracts for hiring workers: temporary contracts, fixed-term contracts, self-employed contracts, while *functional flexibility* involves the training of employees, according to the training needs of the company and the working team autonomy who enables them to adjust the company to new changes.

Wage flexibility aims at reducing labour costs work balancing the ratio "effort-reward" in correlation with performance unit, variations of production activities, internal and external markets conjuncture.

Zamfir (2010) analysed the regulatory framework of labour flexibility at the national level, collective agreements, company level; working time organization and its impact on private and family life.

Wallce (2003) investigated flexibility in eight countries including also Romania in terms of time flexibility, place flexibility or conditions (contract) flexibility revealing that a good level of flexibility is associated with highly educated people who are able to regulate their own working time.

Serban (2012) mentioned that the adaptability of the employees can be significantly improved through an increased labour market flexibility who will lead to a greater productivity, leading to a more efficient allocation of human resources within the economy.

The results of Tang and Cousins (2005) based on the comparison of three West European countries (Netherlands, Sweden and the UK) with five Central East European countries(Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovenia) in terms of working time and integration of work and family life, proving that are distinct routes of flexibility leading to significant differences.

Casuneanu (2014, p.1) identifies the main priorities to increase the labor force flexibility: “multi-qualification of workers, use of information technologies, job rotation, team work, continuous professional training of the employees, updating the job descriptions, expanding the practice of atypical employment contracts – fixed term work contracts, temporary work contracts, contracts for home employment, teleworking”.

3. Methodology and data

The paper aims to analyse the main characteristics of work flexibility in the Romanian companies pointing out the contractual flexibility, the functional flexibility, and the wage flexibility and not ultimately the working time flexibility using a sample of 220 employees.

The empirical research was carried out on a sample of 220 individuals with ages between 15-64 years old having the statute of employee based on a stratified sample concerning the following layers: regional distribution of employed persons, activity sector distribution, gender distribution and urban / rural distribution. The sample obtained was considered to be representative at the national level. The sample was statistically representative in all areas of activity. The data has been collected during the period October-November 2018.

The main research questions of the study were: what type of contractual flexibility is present within the Romanian companies? What kind of elements of work flexibility are present in the Romanian organizations? What are the main characteristics of working time and functional flexibility among Romanian employees? What are the urgent measures that must be taken by the management of the organization in order to improve the motivation and work flexibility of the employees?

In order to capture all these, different types of variables have been used. The contractual flexibility has been measured within the study by various types of contracts: indefinite working contract with full working time, indefinite working contract with partial working time, full-time fixed-term employment contract, and fixed-term contract with part-time work, work contract at home, teleworking (remote work, from home or near the house) or other types of contracts (on call, job sharing).

The presence of main forms of work flexibility has been evaluated using dichotomous variables coded by 1-for the presence and 0-otherwise.

The main characteristics of working time and functional flexibility have been quantified using dichotomous variables coded by 1-for the presence and 0-otherwise.

The urgent measures that must be taken by the management of the organization in order to improve the motivation and work flexibility of the employees have been quantified using dichotomous variables coded by 1-for the presence and 0-otherwise.

The empirical analysis was based on frequencies and descriptive statistics. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20 (SPSS) was used to perform the analysis.

4. Empirical results

4.1. Sample profile

From the total of 220 Romanian employees interviewed, most of them were males (55%) and have ages ranging between 36-45 years old(30%) respectively 46-55 years old(30%). Only 5% of them have ages under 26 years old and a very small proportion were elderly (55 years and over, 7%). The sample regional distribution revealed a relatively balanced distribution, 20% of interviewed employees coming from Bucharest-Ilfov, while almost 11%-12% of them were coming from other regions of the country. Approximately 31% of employees come from small companies with almost 49 employees, while 27% of sample work in large companies with more than 250 employees. The majority of respondents (70%) declared to work in limited liability companies, while only 7% of them in public institutions. Most of the employees work in companies from service area (44%) followed by manufacturing industry (24%) and retail trade (11%). Almost 27% of employees have as length of service over 10 years, while 23% of them have between 1-3 years, respectively 5-10 years. Concerning the years of experience in management positions, an overwhelming proportion of employees (82%) declared not to have such an experience.

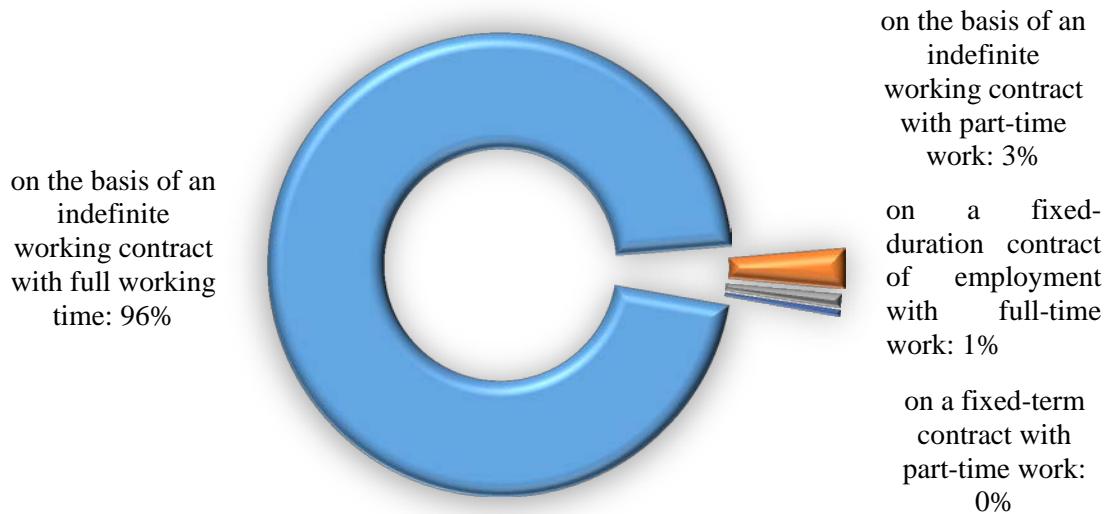
Regarding the main occupation, a quit large proportion of employees declared to be skilled workers (42%), while only 19% of them were higher education specialists and 15% of them declare to be public services' employees

It is worth to mention that a large proportion(42%) of interviewed employees have salary under the threshold of 2500 lei and only 6% of them earned between 5000 and 7000 lei, while an even smaller proportion(2%0 earned between 7000 and 10000lei.

4.2. Revealing the main characteristics of work flexibility

Analyzing the contractual flexibility (temporary contracts, fixed-term contracts, self-employed contracts) among Romanian employees, it can be highlighted that the majority of Romanian employees has an indefinite working contract with full working time (96%), while 3% of them has indefinite working time with part-time work and only 1% of employees work on the basis of fixed duration contract with full time. Therefore, we can conclude that the contractual flexibility is not much present within the Romanian organizations.

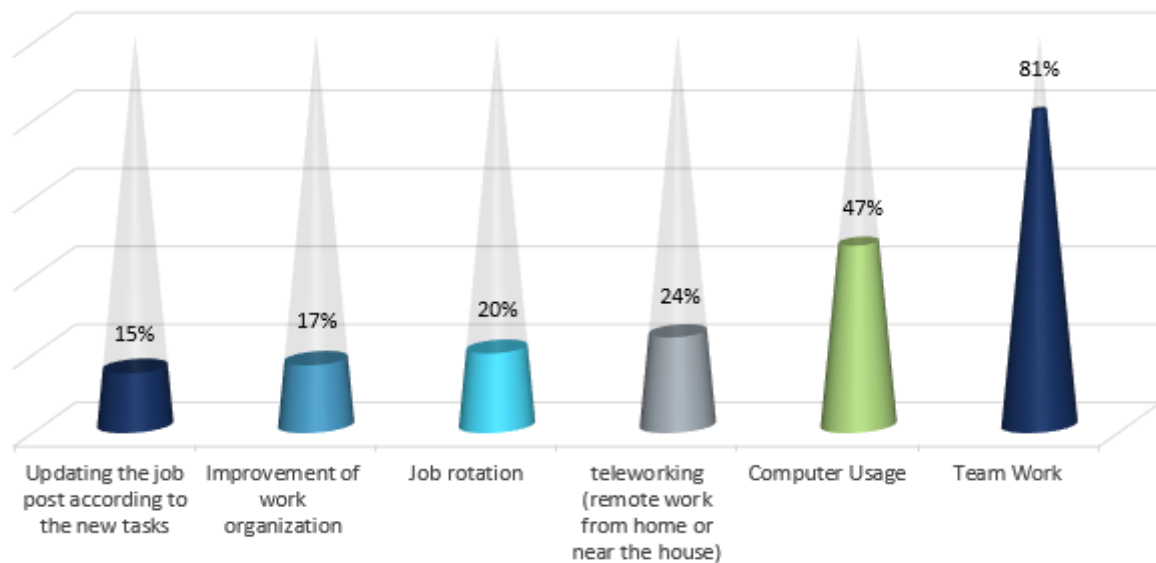
Figure no. 1 Types of Romanian employee contracts



Source: Own processing

Asked about the main forms of flexibility present at the current job, Romanian employees mentioned in a large proportion (81% of them) work in team, followed by computer usage (47%) teleworking (24%) and job rotation (20%).

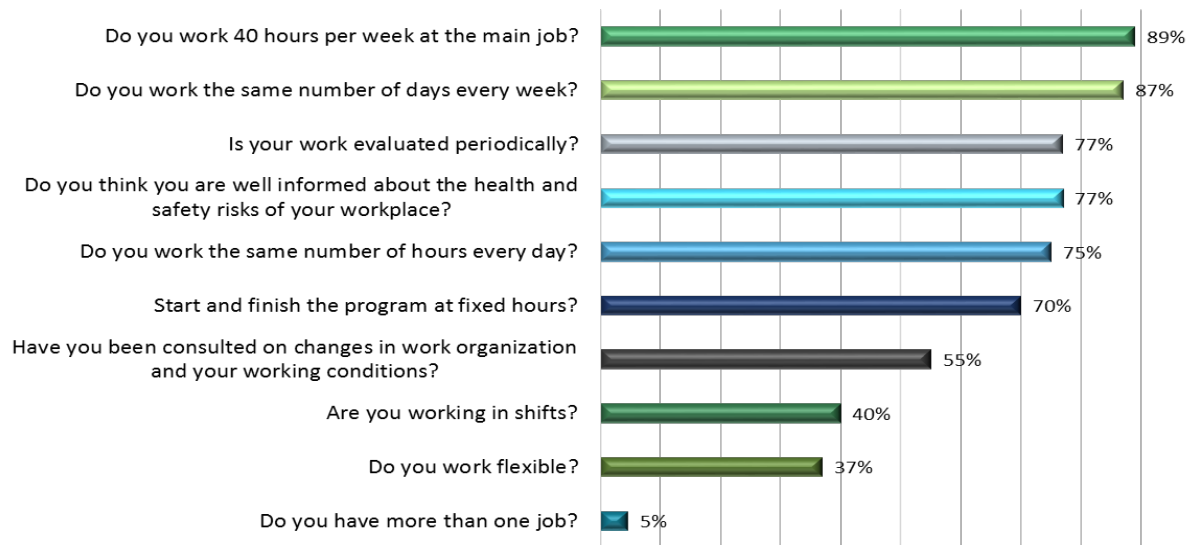
Figure no. 2. Main forms of work flexibility practiced at the job



Source: Own processing

Analyzing the responses offered by the employees concerning the main elements regarding the working time and activities at the post, 89% of them declared to work 40 hours per week at the main job and 87% of them work the same number of days per week. About 70% of them mentioned that they start and finish the program at fixed hours and only 55% declared to know about changes in work organization and working conditions. On the other side, 40% of employees declared to work in shifts and only 37% of them have work flexible. Therefore, working time flexibility manifested by work with flexible working hours, part-time work, work in overtime or work outside normal working hours is not much present in the Romanian organizations. Only 5% of interviewed employees declared to have more than one job.

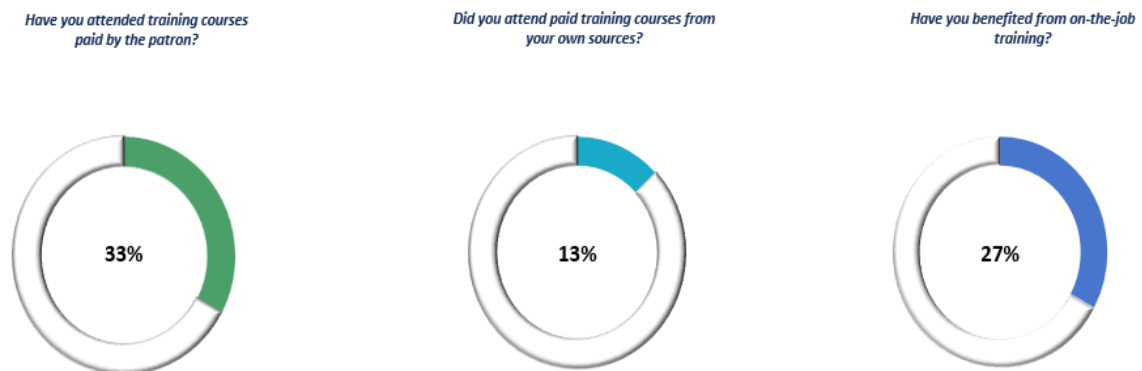
Figure no. 3 Main elements regarding the working time and activities at the post



Source: Own processing

The functional flexibility relating on training of employees, according to the training needs of the company and on the working team autonomy who enables them to adjust the company to new changes is present into a small extent in the Romanian companies.

Figure no. 4 Main forms of functional flexibility



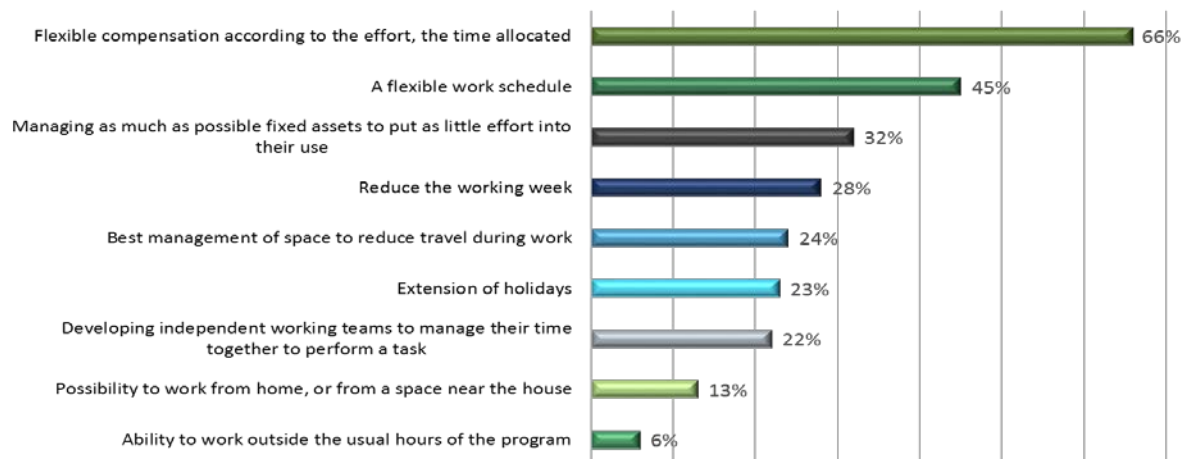
Source: Own processing

Only 33% of employees declared to attend training courses paid by the patron and only 13% pay for training courses from their own sources, while almost 27% of employees benefited from on-the-job training.

Asked about what kind of measures need to be taken in order to increase the flexibility of employing the workforce and the working time of employees, most of employees(66%) mentioned the flexible compensation according to the effort and the allocated time, and about 45% of employees declared a flexible work schedule. Therefore, it is important to mention that for the Romanian employees, wage flexibility and working-time flexibility would be highly appreciated.

Teleworking was mentioned by only 13% of employees while functional flexibility given by the working team autonomy in 22% of cases.

Figure no. 5. Main measures that need to be taken to increase the flexibility of employing the workforce and the working time of employees



Source: Own processing

More than 70% of Romanian employees declared to be satisfied with the working conditions from the current job, while only 3% of them mentioned to be dissatisfied.

5. Conclusions

The paper aimed to analyse the main characteristics of work flexibility in the Romanian companies analysing the contractual, functional, wage and alike the working time flexibility.

The empirical results revealed that the main forms of work flexibility present in the Romanian companies are team work, computer usage and teleworking, while working time flexibility and contractual flexibility are not much present in the Romanian organizations.

The functional flexibility relating on training of employees and on the working team autonomy is present into a small extent in the Romanian companies.

Among the main measures pointed out by the Romanian employees to increase the level of work flexibility, wage flexibility and working-time flexibility would be highly appreciated. Therefore, flexibility become very important in the context of in which the Romanian labor market has entered a new era. Employees and employers have become partners. There is a need to add more flexibility at the job.

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