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## **Assessing the effect of employee commitment on flexibility and competitiveness of the organization**

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### **Abstract**

Organizational flexibility is the organizational ability that enables organizations to operate in a turbulent environment. Organizational flexibility includes two categories of internal and external flexibility; the external type includes qualified, trained, educated and competent people who can adapt to the restructuring. Flexibility in human resource management is one of the most important abilities of a successful manager. The manager is constantly faced with various changes in his work environment and sometimes has to change the usual procedures and standards. Employees, meanwhile, have their own resistances, and having the manager's flexibility in dealing with them is a skill in itself and cannot be fought. The present study is an applied research and in terms of nature and method is a non-experimental descriptive research. In this study, Cochran's formula was used for sampling and 385 questionnaires were distributed among specialists, experts, university professors and administrators familiar with the research topic. The method of data collection in this research is the use of questionnaires as well as the use of library information and referring to the documents in scientific and valid articles and understanding and inferring from this information. The mean test was calculated on the main and specific hypotheses in SPSS22 software and at a confidence level of 0.95. Finally, a framework for examining the effect of employee commitment on flexibility and competitiveness of the organization is provided.

**Keywords:** Organization, Employee Commitment, Competitiveness, Flexibility.

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## **Introduction:**

Flexible managers are rich in experience because they like new experiences and are interested in touching and experiencing them. They are willing to accept new and unconventional ideas and are eager to hear and explore new ideas and thoughts. They are less attached to their ideas or to traditional ideas. And they try to hear and think about what others have to say [1]. These tendencies do not mean that they are unprincipled people and do not adhere to their principles and beliefs. They may willingly accept a theory or act as a traditionalist for compelling reasons [2]. It does not matter, but it is important to hear, analyze, review and comment. Not that we do not have a phone to listen to. One of the main reasons for employees' resistance to change is the manager's inflexibility against the ideas and opinions of others, as this makes people think that they have no choice but to be seen as a machine [3]. Therefore, having flexibility in manpower is one of the success factors of successful managers. There are many managers who seemingly have no objection to this statement, but in practice they are not, and in any case, they have the last word and cause the employees to retreat and kill their creativity [4]. A successful and flexible manager does not seek to change his employees [5]. If too much pressure does not solve the problem, it replaces calm. If kindness does not work, it replaces justice. This manager flexibility can penetrate the lower layers of the organization and make everyone flexible in order to achieve the goal, and deal with change [6]. Lack of flexibility is one of the worst weaknesses of a manager that affects the whole organization. And inflexibility is rampant throughout the organization [7]. Now suppose all the forces of the organization are inflexible and stand up to any change. See what happens. We have seen many examples that have led a large organization to the brink of extinction because of this inflexibility [8].

### **Importance of Issue:**

Basically, the business environment of the past has been a predictable and low-change space, so most models of strategic analysis and organizational capabilities have not paid special attention to organizational flexibility [9]. On the other hand, in traditional analytical models, the power of the organization to influence the environment was practically zero or very little, and in this regard, organizational flexibility to influence the environment was not considered [10]. But in the highly competitive and turbulent new environment, organizations must be able to adapt to changes in the environment and at the same time try to be effective in achieving their strategies on the business environment [11]. These requirements have led to these requirements. Flexibility is considered as one of the important issues in organizational thinking [12]. The definition of flexibility is rooted in resource-based theories. Researchers define flexibility as the ability of a company to respond to diverse demands from a competitive dynamic environment [13]. Flexibility is a multidimensional concept that can be related to many components in the organization. Various terms such as capacity, adaptability, sensitivity, elasticity and agility may be considered as synonyms [14]. The resilience of human resources has become an undeniable necessity in today's uncertain and dynamic environment, which enables the organization to respond appropriately to rapid environmental changes. While researchers in strategic human resource management have considered human resource flexibility as a source of sustainable competitive advantage for the company, how the impact of human resource flexibility on organizational performance has not been studied empirically [15]. Flexibility is also considered as a feature of dynamism. Flexibility is the ability to adapt, stand up, or manage uncertainty, but flexibility is a term that is widely used when there are not many definitions of it [16]. Organizations today operate in a dynamic environment with a high degree of uncertainty, so to cope with the environment and the proper and

optimal use of their resources; they have to create flexibility in their human resources. Human resource flexibility refers to the ability of employees to perform a wide range of activities, which makes employees react appropriately in all situations by understanding the organizational situation.

**Different approaches to flexibility:**

The framework of organizational flexibility analysis shows the five main cornerstones and three forces of how the flexibility contradiction in the organization can be resolved, which includes managerial capabilities, organizational design and the effect of changes in competitive forces [17]. Managing the current situation shapes the flexibility of the organization. Organizational design identifies potential for flexibility, and competitive forces make clear to us what changes are needed [18]. The level of super flexibility expresses how and how quickly flexibility changes can occur over time. Given that these factors can have different effects on each other, the organization will experience different approaches to flexibility over time.

**Flexibility Paradox:** Flexibility paradox refers to creating the right balance between organizational stability and the flexibility needed to deal with environmental change. If the organization cannot adapt to environmental changes (especially in turbulent environments), business continuity will be at risk of failure, and if the organization does not have the necessary stability to implement plans and goals, disorder and confusion of efficiency and effectiveness will disrupt the organization [19]. Therefore, one of the management tasks is strategic analysis of the optimal point of flexibility in the organization, which in this model is known as resolving the flexibility contradiction [11].

**Controllability:** Researchers organizational resilience framework is based on control theory in the sense that in this model, the control capacity of managers

and the controllability of the organization in the face of business environment is considered [7]. The ability to control the factors affecting organizational flexibility in managerial capabilities and the degree of organizational controllability is also described in the category of organizational design. Therefore, creating organizational flexibility requires two dimensions of tasks, one is managerial tasks that can continuously monitor managerial changes and respond appropriately to them, and the other task is to design the organization based on flexibility components [9]. An organization that has the necessary potential for flexibility in different situations and the management of the organization when necessary to be able to have the flexibility potential to perform a managerial task [12].

**Management Task:** The managerial challenge of flexibility is that the management can figure out a suitable and sufficient combination of flexibility arrangements and procedures for the organization so that the company can face business problems in a flexible way [17]. In this context, flexibility procedures are divided into six types, which include two categories of internal and external flexibility, internal flexibility procedures tell how to manage the effects of the environment on the organization and external flexibility procedures indicate how the organization affects the environment [19]. It is self-evident that each of these types is divided into the following three categories, which include six flexibility procedures. The managerial task of flexibility means to provide the organizational competitive advantages based on which the organization adapts to the environmental turmoil [20].

**Operational flexibility:** Frequent but small changes with a short time frame that are related to performing operations in the organization and the adoption of these procedures does not affect the stability of the relationship between the organization and its environment [21]. The purpose of these organizational flexibility control procedures is to create the appropriate integration between the

organization and its environment to conduct the organization's business processes [22].

**Structural flexibility:** The ability of management to adapt part of the organizational structure and decision-making in the organization and communication processes and respond to environmental changes with the approach of affecting the environment or affecting it is organizational flexibility [5]. That is, to what extent can the management of the organization adopt the business structure such as partnership with other factors and integration policies, etc [23].

**Strategic flexibility:** Flexibility procedures that relate to the goals of the organization or its environment fall into the realm of strategic flexibility. These procedures are rarely adopted and are usually related to cases where changes are very important and effective, such as technological changes, new portfolio of products and services in the market or new business rules in the environment that can model competition in it. The face changes significantly [24].

**Organizational design task:** Organizational design includes the organization's capacity for flexibility and specifies the possible limits for combining organizational flexibility [8]. The flexibility potential of the organization must change in two situations, one when the potential to combine the required flexibility is too small for the organization to adapt to the requirements and the other when the potential for flexibility required is too high to Avoid organizational disorder. In this context, the three main components affecting the flexibility potentials of the organization are described. Although these factors are separate from each other, they will affect each other over time [10].

**Technology:** The technologies available in the organization include software, hardware, knowledge and skills, and communication and integration between them, which in terms of flexibility can range from inflexible at the production scale to flexible in the variety of production [11].

**Organizational structure:** The organizational structure is based on a hierarchical division that indicates the division of responsibilities and authorities in the organization. Organizational structures include a range of mechanical and organic models [12].

**Organizational culture:** Organizational culture is an integrated system of ideas that is formed in the minds of employees of the organization and its types can cover from conservative to innovative [15].

### **The concept of flexible work schedules:**

Flexible work schedules are changeable schedules that give employees the freedom to decide when to work or when to leave. For example, a person may prefer to work from 7 am to 1 pm and come to work the next day of the week from 10 am to 6 pm. The rules for implementing these flexible programs vary widely across organizations. However, whenever these programs are used, the employer sets a specific time core or time frame at which employees are required to be present at work (typically from 9 or 10 p.m.). For example, if in a variable work schedule, employees are required to be at work from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., the schedule has a 5 hour time frame or core. These employees have the freedom to be present before 10 am or to leave the office after 3 am. In addition, employers can set a specified time limit for the start and end of work, before and after which no employee has the right to come or leave the workplace. For example, the employer may declare that work does not start before 7 am and after 9 pm, work must end and employees are not allowed to stay at work [25].

Another important feature that may vary widely in setting flexible work schedules is related to hours worked and "the amount of time that work must be done and continued." Some organizations set the required time for work on a daily basis; For example, a person is required to work 8 hours a day. Others announce this schedule weekly; For example, an organization states that not

everyone is required to work 8 hours a day, but must work a total of 40 hours per week. A small number of organizations also set mandatory working hours on a monthly basis [26].

Flexible work plans are more popular today and are used by a large number of employees. Recent surveys in the United States show that 25 percent of employees have the opportunity to change the start and end times of their daily work, and that number is growing every year. In fact, many of these growing proposals for using these flexible work plans are the result of social change (for example, the rise of women in the workforce or families where both couples are employed). It seems that the increasing demand of employees for flexibility in work plans resulting from these social changes is due to the fact that employees want to use this method, because of the more time opportunities it provides them, between the needs of family life and work are better balanced and coordinated [27].

However, research shows that a large number of employees and organizations do not have access to flexible work schedules. The reason may be the different type of industry and the methods of employment in some organizations (part-time versus full-time work). In fact, this type of flexible program can be implemented in most cases in non-manufacturing (service) companies and its use in manufacturing jobs with operational processes and especially in terms of production lines, is associated with many difficulties [28]. In addition to the type of industry that limits the use of flexible programs, the type of job and the way of hiring the use of these programs are also limited. For example, part-time employees in any industry they work in cannot have flexible work plans. Therefore, employers of manufacturing industries and factories, as well as part-time jobs, are very unlikely to offer this type of work plan to employees. In addition, in the United States, female employees, illiterate or non-white



employees are less likely to be allowed to take advantage of these flexible work plans [17].

### **Perceived benefits of flexible work plans:**

There are many reasons for the popularity of flexible work plans, and they usually involve a combination of personal, social, and organizational benefits that allow workers to strike a better balance between their personal lives and their work needs. For example, the positive effects of flexible programs include: reducing the congestion of employees who travel long distances from home to work every day, increasing customer and customer service, increasing other job opportunities for employees, reducing labor conflict And family and better use of recreational and service facilities. In addition, there are several theoretical models to describe how flexible work plans affect important outcomes [1]. The job adjustment model explains how flexible programs affect a person's attitudes and behavior. According to this model, the most coordination (highest correlation) between personal competencies and job competencies will lead to the best performance of the role [4]. In addition, the high correlation between employee needs and the reward system will create the most positive attitude. When job adaptation is high, the person does his job in the best possible way and assumes all the requirements of his role, on the other hand, the organization also meets his personal needs [6].

Using a job adjustment model, using flexible work schedules can help employees better regulate their physiological 24-hour sleep-wake cycle and reduce the stress of being late for work. Employees who can make effective use of order in their sleep-wake cycle should also experience a high correlation between their abilities and the job-required competencies [7]. Person-job fit research supports the idea that person-job matching will lead to the highest performance. Although the results of research on the relationship between job

stress and job performance are mixed, it seems that by reducing job stress, negative reactions can be reduced and therefore job performance is expected to increase [12].

Another model that can explain the benefits of flexible working hours is the theory of job characteristics. This theory is based on the fact that the main characteristics of a job (for example, independence and job identity) that have a positive psychological quality have effective consequences and have a positive effect on job performance and job satisfaction. For example, when flexible work plans can give a person a sense of independence at work, it makes him happy at work. Thus, using this model, several other theoretical discussions are created that can well demonstrate the impact of flexible work plans on organizational outcomes, including productivity and performance, absenteeism, and job satisfaction [14].

As mentioned, the implementation of flexible work plans gives employees more independence. Job characteristics theory predicts that as job independence increases, so does job performance; A result that the research confirms well. Overall, in addition to the impact of flexible programs on performance and productivity, these programs are also expected to have positive effects on employee absenteeism [15]. In a flexible work schedule, the individual manages the time spent in the organization at his or her own discretion and choice. Such employees are better able to respond to work and non-work conflicts and experience less stress; Research has shown a link between reducing stress and reducing absenteeism [18]. With these programs, employees can no longer leave their jobs under the pretext of illness, because they can adjust their work schedule. Experimental research has shown that being at work is positively associated with having customizable work schedules, and organizations have reported a significant reduction in absenteeism with these schedules [20]. Overall, research shows that using flexible programs has reduced work

absenteeism. As mentioned, according to the theory of job characteristics, the use of these programs is associated with an increase in positive job attitudes such as job satisfaction [23]. In fact, practical research has shown that job independence is positively associated with job satisfaction. In general, flexible work plans lead to increased job satisfaction and especially satisfaction with the flexible program.

### **An overview of flexible work plan research:**

In the research literature of flexible work programs, two comprehensive research studies have been conducted. A review of the narratives of these types of work programs shows that there is a consistent definition of these programs, and that these programs have almost uniquely positive effects on job attitudes and employee productivity [13]. However, the results presented for the use of these programs are somewhat variable, and some reports confirm its positive and fundamental effects, while others show no relationship [14].

A quantitative and comprehensive review of the research background on this issue (meta-analysis) has shown that flexible programs have a positive relationship on employee productivity, job satisfaction, satisfaction with flexible programs and absenteeism [22]. However, the degree of significance of the relationships between these variables and the implementation of flexible programs are different from each other. For example, the use of these programs has been more meaningful with job absence than productivity and shows the least impact on job satisfaction [26]. Based on this, the assumption is confirmed that using a flexible program is more related to attending and staying at work than to employees' attitudes and effectiveness. These mixed results indicate the existence of some possible moderating variables that affect these relationships [9]. This meta-analytic study has shown that moderating variables are present in these relationships. Evidence shows that flexible work plans for the general staff

are associated with an impact on positive job outcomes, but have little effect on professional and high-level staff and managers [14]. Therefore, people who have a high level of job independence, flexible work plans have no advantage over them. Flexibility (taking into account the core time core) may also moderate the positive effects of flexible work schedules and schedules, for example, the shorter the time core, the more efficient work (productivity) and positive outcomes of the work [18]. Therefore, during flexible working hours, it is necessary to have more supervision and control over the length of time that employees work, but employees may not be comfortable with these supervisions. The meta-analysis results also showed that the positive effects of flexible work plans diminish over time [28].

Comprehensive research from other studies has found that the level of role conflict that employee's experience (employee role conflict at home and at work; being an employee or a mother) is a modifier to the consequences of a flexible program. In this regard, research shows that people who are at a high level of role conflict are more likely to be attracted to organizations that have flexible work plans, while this tendency is not seen in people who are at a low level of conflict. Therefore, the existence of such moderating variables shows that satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the programs that can be changed varies from person to person, and also the positive or negative consequences of these programs are influenced by other variables. For example, if there is an organization where none of its employees experience role conflict, the implementation of flexible programs will not affect the work process.

### **Research hypotheses**

1. Hypothesis 1: Employee commitment has a positive and significant effect on the operational flexibility of the organization.

2. Hypothesis 2: Employee commitment has a positive and significant effect on the structural flexibility of the organization.
3. Hypothesis 3: Employee commitment has a positive and significant effect on the strategic flexibility of the organization.
4. Hypothesis 4: Employee commitment has a positive and significant effect on the competitiveness of the organization.

### **The method, target population and sample**

The statistical population of the study includes all managers and employee of Irankhodro Company. The sample size formulas and procedures used for categorical data are very similar, but some variations do exist. Since the data are qualitatively and the number of statistical community is unlimited, so the sample size calculation formula is as follows:

$$n = \frac{Z_{\alpha/2}^2 p_0 (1-p_0)}{e^2} \quad (1)$$

In this study, researcher has set the alpha level a priori at .05, plans to use a proportional variable, has set the level of acceptable error at 5%, and has estimated the standard deviation of the scale as .5. Cochran's sample size formula for categorical data and an example of its use is presented here along with explanations as to how these decisions were made.

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{(0.05)^2} = 384.16 \quad (2)$$

Where  $Z_{\alpha/2}$  = value for selected alpha level of .025 in each tail = 1.96.

(The alpha level of .05 indicates the level of risk the researcher is willing to take that true margin of error may exceed the acceptable margin of error).

Where  $(p)(q)$  = estimate of variance = .25.

(Maximum possible proportion (.5) \*1-Maximum possible proportion (.5) produces maximum possible sample size).

Where  $\epsilon$  = acceptable margin of error for proportion being estimated = .1  
(Error researcher is willing to except).

According to the formula at least 97 samples are needed. Therefore, 100 questionnaires were sent between experts and were collected.

### **Analysis of information**

The statistical sample in this research includes 385 experts based on questionnaires with complete and usable answers. 25% of these experts have a master's degree, 16% have Ph.D. degrees and 59% have a bachelor's degree and less. 43% of these experts are male and 57% are female.

In this research, according to the conceptual model of research, there are 4 hypotheses that a researcher-made questionnaire consisted of 46 questions. There are 8 questions related to the first hypothesis, 7 questions to the second hypothesis, 7 questions to the third hypothesis, 8 to the fourth hypothesis, 8 to the fifth hypothesis and 8 to the sixth hypothesis. SPSS software and LISREL were used for statistical analysis and one-sample t-test was used to analyze the statistical hypotheses. We used SPSS 22 to analyze the data. In following the results of test hypotheses are offered:

**Testing Hypothesis H1.** Employee commitment has a positive and significant effect on the operational flexibility of the organization.

The results of SPSS are shown below:

**Table. 1.** One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
H1	385	6.8443	1.01973	.17362

**Table. 2.** One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 5					
	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
H1	16.844	384	.000	1.4721	1.09443	1.6832

**Testing Hypothesis H2.** Employee commitment has a positive and significant effect on the structural flexibility of the organization.

The results of SPSS are shown below:

**Table. 3.** One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
H2	385	6.8426	1.0964	.17031

**Table. 4.** One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 5					
	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
H2	16.8443	384	.000	1.6843	1.6385	2.0591

**Testing Hypothesis H3.** Employee commitment has a positive and significant effect on the strategic flexibility of the organization.

The results of SPSS are shown below:

**Table. 5.** One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
H3	385	6.7392	1.0793	.19831

**Table. 6.** One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 5					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
H3	15.0946	384	.000	1.7931	1.0588	1.7692

**Testing Hypothesis H4.** Employee commitment has a positive and significant effect on the competitiveness of the organization.

The results of SPSS are shown below:

**Table. 7.** One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
H4	385	6.7593	1.0658	.19643

**Table. 8.** One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 5					
	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
H4	17.7443	384	.000	1.9653	1.6883	1.9752

**Conclusion:**

Quantitative and descriptive study of research background shows the effect of implementing variable work programs on organizational outcomes. However, the history suggests that in order for organizations to be more successful in using flexible programs. They need to realize which of their organizational variables they intend to change or improve (reducing absenteeism or increasing productivity and productivity). In addition, organizations must examine which jobs work in conjunction with each other, and which are highly interdependent to complete the work. Therefore, excessive use of variable programs disrupts the business relationship between these jobs and will have unwanted and unpleasant consequences. Finally, as the results of the meta-analysis showed, the positive effects of flexible work plans are reduced in the long run; Therefore, organizations should know that some of the benefits of using flexible programs show themselves in the short term and the positive consequences diminish over time.



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