ARTICLE

ENGAGEMENT OF MOLDOVAN ORGANIZATIONS IN INCREASING EMPLOYMENT THROUGH FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

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Abstract

Work flexibility as an element of work flexicurity has had an impact on employment at the national level. In this study, work flexibility is expressed through flexible work arrangements. Organisations may implement various flexible work arrangements, depending on their size or specifically promoted policies in this sense. Thus, organisations indirectly contribute to higher employment at the national level. The aim of the study is to evaluate flexible work arrangements from the perspective of organizations in order to determine to what extent they are available for implementation. To test and validate the results, we develop a questionnaire that includes ten flexible work arrangements. Each flexible work arrangement is rated on a Likert scale from 1 to 5. The survey comprises 350 companies of different sizes from various sectors, located in urban and rural areas. In order to process, analyse and interpret the results, several statistical methods are used: principal component analysis, the ANOVA procedure and the post-hoc test. The findings show that some flexible work arrangements are better rated than others. Differences are also identified in the evaluation of flexible work arrangements by organization size. Our results provide evidence that some organizations show reluctance towards certain flexible work arrangements. Moreover, flexible work arrangements with higher scores are more likely to be implemented by organizations, which may lead to higher employment at the national level.

Implications for Central European audience: Work flexibility is an important and promising element in the context of changing work paradigms. In this context, organizations need to adapt their HR strategies and policies by taking into account work flexibility trends. It will enable them to attract the required workforce both quantitatively and qualitatively. Likewise, organizations implementing different flexible work arrangements could contribute indirectly to increasing employment at the national level.

Keywords: Flexible work arrangements; work flexibility; flexicurity; employment; labour market

JEL Classification: J21; J41; J53

Introduction

Over the years, employment has been the main concern for national and international institutions, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), providing support to sustainable economic growth. Flexicurity aims to increase employment and labour market efficiency. Flexicurity also seeks to enhance the analysis and public debate on the labour market, welfare state as well as their interaction (Burroni & Keune, 2011). Therefore, flexicurity has become a key issue in the EU, having been included in the European Employment Strategy (Van Vliet & Nijboer, 2012). The European Commission itself approached flexicurity as a common policy in Europe (Rydel, 2011) and defined it as an integrating strategy for strengthening flexibility and security on the labour market (European Commission, 2007), while the updated Lisbon Strategy set the goals of strengthening employment and modernising social protection systems, growing labour market flexibility through higher adaptability of employees and businesses, increasing investments in human capital, as well as promoting life-long learning.

As a research topic, flexicurity was initially studied at the microeconomic level (Andersen et al., 2009; Auer, 2010; Andersen, 2012; Bredgaard & Madsen, 2018). Besides the different interests of the actors on the labour market, the right balance between flexibility and social security could have a long-term contribution to strengthening labour market efficiency (OECD, 2004). This led to flexicurity becoming an element of national policy (Bonoli & Emmenegger, 2010).

Houwing (2010) contended that several labour market rules relevant for the concept of flexicurity are regulated by collective bargaining agreements specific to each sector. In this context, Sultana (2013) mentioned that the adoption of unusual work arrangements could be welcomed by some categories of workers who believe that flexitime, job rotation and sharing, the opportunity to move from full-time to part-time positions without losing job security, and free time for studying may help them achieve better job satisfaction and maintain their professional, family and daily life commitments, with more free time for self-development and self-accomplishment.

Remote work, shortened workweek and other work arrangements, along with other types of flexible arrangements, are the new features that will be shaping future workplaces, ensuring social sustainability (Alsulami et al., 2023).

Considering the diversity of flexible work arrangements, only some of these arrangements have been studied in terms of specific contexts and circumstances and behaviour of various categories of employees. These studies have investigated the impact of temporary employment on the social identification of employees and on their professional motivation at work (Lhereux & Parmentier, 2022), the relation between flexible work arrangements and turnover intention (Tsen et al., 2021; Berber et al., 2022; Gasic & Berber, 2023), and the link between non-standard work (temporary and part-time work) and innovation performance in industrial companies of five European countries (Reljic et al., 2021).

Remote work is expected to remain in the foreseeable future, so managers should make sure that the employees do not feel professionally isolated (Jamal et al., 2022). If the employees can reach their professional objectives by working remotely, many reluctant employers

should reconsider their attitudes (Bamieh & Zieglert, 2022). Remote work was a topic of research during the crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Pasquel Cajas et al., 2023).

Although several studies have analysed flexible work arrangements, they have concentrated on solving problems of economic and social nature. Only a few articles have looked into the relationship between flexible work arrangements and employment. Departing from this gap in the literature, the objective of this study is to assess flexible work arrangements from the organisational perspective as they have direct implications for employment growth at the national level. By conducting this study, we attempt to raise the awareness of employers, so that through their organisational policies regarding flexible work arrangements, they can get involved in solving such national problems as employment growth. The main objective of our study leads to the formulation of complementary objectives such as the assessment of the concept of flexicurity, which lies at the foundation of employment growth, theoretical analysis of work flexibility as an element of flexicurity, and streamlining flexible work arrangements as an integral part of work flexibility.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first section reviews the literature in the field on flexicurity, work flexibility and flexible work arrangements. Section 2 describes the research methodology, with a focus on the research question and the hypotheses, sample identification and the research methods used. Section 3 presents the results of the study. The last section contains final observations with a focus on the main conclusions and study limitations.

1 Literature Review

1.1 Flexicurity concept

The concept of flexicurity first appeared in Professor Adriaansens' presentations in 1995 (Wilthagen & Tros, 2004). Adriaansens defined flexicurity as a shift from job security towards employment security and suggested compensating for the decline in job security due to fewer permanent jobs and easier dismissals by improving employment opportunities and social security (Eurofound, 2007). Madsen (2004) paved the way towards a pragmatic view of flexicurity by suggesting a "golden triangle" based on flexible labour markets, generous support for unemployment and a strong emphasis placed on activation measures such as improvement of competences and professional reconversion of the unemployed.

Wilthagen and Rogovschi (2002) defined flexicurity as a political strategy that, on the one hand, synchronously and deliberately tries to strengthen the flexibility of labour markets, the work organisation and labour relations, and on the other hand, aims to increase employment and social security, especially for the vulnerable groups found on the labour market or outside it. Furthermore, Withagen and Tros (2004) viewed flexicurity as a multidimensional concept that could be described as a four-element matrix for both flexibility (external numerical flexibility, internal numerical flexibility, functional flexibility and payment flexibility) and security (job security, employment security, income security and combined security).

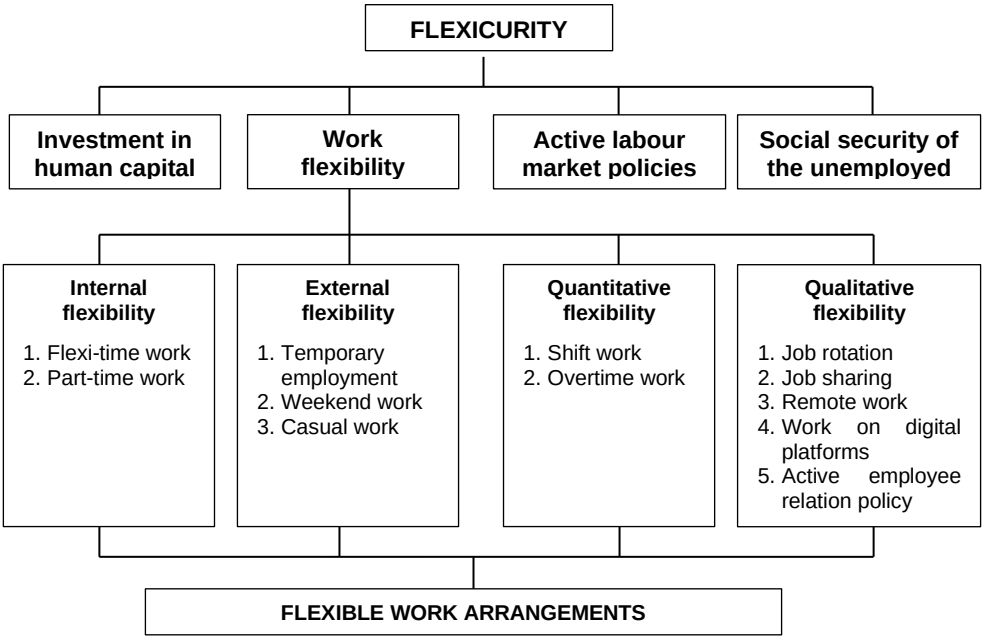
Flexicurity has become a research topic after the 2008 economic crisis (Heyes, 2013; Hastings & Heyes, 2016). The authors have investigated ways in which the reaction to the economic crisis affected national governmental policies related to different dimensions of

flexicurity. Several countries have tried to reduce the level of job losses and stimulate employment by subsidizing jobs and cutting social security contributions payable by employees (Heyes, 2013).

At the organisational level, flexicurity has been analysed in terms of expenses as a result of flexible employment policies implementation (Rubery et al., 2016). The authors put forward the idea that flexibility could stimulate revenues and limit the expenses of public finance by stimulating employment growth, and increasing tax earnings and by lowering the need for social benefits.

Taking into account the complexity and the multidimensionality of flexicurity, Figure 1 shows the place of flexible work arrangements within flexicurity.

Figure 1 | Positioning flexible work arrangements within flexicurity



Source: Authors

Of all the flexible work arrangements shown in Figure 1, shift work and overtime work were excluded from our research. In our opinion, these two flexible work arrangements do not have an impact on employment. The next two parts of this section describe work flexibility in general and flexible work arrangements in particular.

1.2 Work flexibility – an element of flexicurity

As mentioned above, flexicurity is based on four main elements. One of these elements is work flexibility, which involves flexible work arrangements for employees. Trends in work flexibility have appeared in the last 40 years as an effect of deep changes on the labour markets of many industrialised countries (Campbell & Burgess, 2018). During this time, work flexibility has turned into a concern for several researchers (Atkinson, 1985; Louise et al., 1998; Cappelli & Keler, 2012; Wickramasinghe et al., 2019).

According to Louise et al. (1998), there are four work flexibility strategies: internal flexibility, external flexibility, numerical or quantitative flexibility, and functional or qualitative flexibility. The authors believe that internal flexibility refers to the fluctuation in labour demand at the workplace, having applied flexible work programmes and overtime work for the existing labour force. In the case of external flexibility, demand for work could be satisfied by attracting workforce from an external market by using temporary employment. Numerical flexibility is a variation in the amount of work done by employees that could be implemented by changing the number of working hours or through shift work. Finally, functional flexibility is the variation in the content of work that refers to the qualification of employees, and for which, job rotation or horizontal and vertical integration of competences have been used.

Wickramasinghe et al. (2019) argued that work flexibility strategies contribute to reducing unemployment and increasing economic performance at the national level. They also suggested that the strategies mentioned earlier could promote societal results related to work redistribution between the employed and the unemployed.

Flexible work is a structural mechanism promoted among employees and justified by employers as a way of providing benefits for employees' healthcare, family and personal life (Waterhouse et al., 2010).

Hill et al. (2008) studied work flexibility from the organisational and employee perspectives. The authors argued that the organisational perspective towards work flexibility pays less attention to employees. From the employee perspective, work flexibility shows to what extent an employee can choose the main aspects of their professional life, especially those related to the place, moment and period of work.

Work flexibility includes advantages and benefits for both employers and employees. Employer benefits refer to a healthier and more satisfied workforce, higher performance, better recruitment and employee retention, lower absenteeism, low accommodation costs, low use of healthcare services, knowledge sharing and skill development resulting from workers covering different roles, or from the reorganisation of work duties (Fagan et al., 2012). In turn, employee benefits include working time flexibility (Tietze et al., 2009), low work-life conflict and less work-related stress (Wheatley, 2012).

1.3 Features of flexible work arrangements

Flexible work arrangements reflect work flexibility the best and could be defined as the negotiated employment terms regarding time and/or place of work (Catalyst, 1997). According to Yildiz (2023), the concept of flexible work arrangements is multidimensional, involving different aspects that have an impact on both employees and organisations. Thus, flexible work arrangements may comprise flexible working time, part-time, temporary employment, remote work, job rotation, job sharing, weekend work, casual work, etc.

Flexible working time (flexi-time) refers to flexible start and end of work time by keeping a basic working day interval for all employees. Flexible working time is more usual for highly qualified than for unqualified employees (Kossek & Distelberg, 2009). Flexible working time also makes it possible to keep the working hours equal to a full-time position (Stavrou, 2005). If flexi-time is implemented as an employee-centred strategy, it ensures a higher profit for

companies (Lee & De Voe, 2012). Implementation of flexible working time leads to higher productivity at the workplace (Giovanis, 2018). When flexible working time is supported by company management and matches the work culture, it is valued due to both personal and work-related reasons (Galea et al., 2014).

Part-time work occurs when the working week is less than 30 hours. It also includes work done only at the weekends. This arrangement of work organisation is also viewed as a solution to unemployment (Kyyrä et al., 2017). Part-time work is a means of reaching a work-life balance, being increasingly used by employers for attracting and retaining personnel over their career span (Gascoigne & Kelliher, 2017).

Temporary employment is defined as a contractual work relationship between an employer and an employee for a specific period of time or for a specific task. Most countries regulate temporary employment through specific legal provisions regarding the longest contract duration, the number of eligible contract renewals and justified reasons for appeals (ILO, 2015). Temporary employment can be viewed from both the employer's and the employee's perspectives. Employees opt for temporary employment in order to use their professional skills in different organisational activities, switching between employers, which leads to an increase in knowledge and better occupational practices (Von Hippel et al., 1997). From the employer perspective, companies use temporary employment as it offers them more flexibility in meeting the changing needs and in response to technological and market requirements (De Stefano et al., 2019), and in getting access to a set of external information (Wachsen & Blind, 2016). Temporary employment is a general term referring mainly to four types of work agreements: fixed-term, occasional, seasonal and agency temporary employment (Lheureux & Parmentier, 2022).

Remote work is another work flexibility arrangement that has been increasingly expanding with the development of information technology. Remote workers benefit from more elasticity in terms of location, as well as working time, adapted to their preferences (Tietze et al., 2009). Efficiency of remote work relies on the capacity of managers to properly motivate and involve the employees (Chatterjee et al., 2022), and also on the need to build relationships based on trust (Asatiani et al., 2021). Remote work has also been intensely studied during the COVID-19 pandemic (Straus et al., 2022, Arntz et al., 2022; Chambel et al., 2022; Pasquel Cajas et al., 2023). Seen as an exception to the general rule in many companies, remote work could increasingly be adopted by employers as the experience gained during the COVID-19 pandemic has changed their perception of this arrangement of work organization (Bamieh & Ziegler, 2022).

ITC-based remote work refers to work done partially but regularly outside the main office, whether at the employer's premises or in a home office using ITC for connecting to a shared online company computer system (Andriessen & Vartiainen, 2006). From the employee perspective, motivation for remote work is driven by the need to cut the amount of time spent commuting, which the employee can spend carrying out other tasks (Popma, 2013).

Casual work has evolved differently from one country to another, which is aimed at strengthening employment. The change in the content of work has boosted the extension of casual work, as well as its impact. Wooden and Hawke (1998) analysed the factors leading to casual employment, finding that the size of an organisation and its union activity are key

factors for the use of casual workers. In turn, casual work could take two forms: intermittent and on-call work (Eurofound, 2020).

Job rotation is viewed as both a measure for supporting employment and a key instrument for management development as side tasks usually coincide with changes brought to job descriptions and the required tasks (Wright & Snell, 1998). Side transfers appear when low-performance employees are relocated to various positions to get a better match between a person and a position, or to create new job duties in an organisation (Kampkötter et al., 2018).

Job sharing involves sharing a full-time job between two employees. People sharing a job are responsible for the whole position, each sharing person getting the advantage of a better work-life balance (Wheatley, 2017). The position is often shared equally between the participants, depending on the task/time/role or other specific employer criteria (Branine, 2004). In some cases, job sharing can be replaced by partial work or work from home to avoid interruptions or costs linked to finding a partner (Poelmans & Beham, 2008).

Considering the diversity of flexible work arrangements, some authors have analysed their impact on employees' health (Sargent et al., 2021), work-life balance (Prowse & Prowse, 2015), employee satisfaction (Wheatley, 2017) and gender equality (Sullivan & Smithson, 2007).

In order to determine the extent to which flexible work arrangements could contribute to employment growth in Moldova, we analysed how Moldovan employers evaluate such practices. Depending on the results, we will be discussing the level of involvement of Moldovan employers in the growth of employment at the national level.

2 Research Methodology

Our methodological approach is based on several steps, each contributing to reaching the study objective.

2.1 Research question formulation

The need to approach this topic stems from the fact that the Republic of Moldova has the lowest rate of employment in Europe. In the past ten years, the rate of employment in the Republic of Moldova remained at about 40% (Birca, 2019). Practices of EU states have also shown that different flexible work arrangements lead to an increase in employment. Thus, depending on the importance given to various flexible work arrangements, we will determine to what extent local employers are ready to implement these practices, without affecting their own economic interests, and provide more opportunities for employees, including those of having the employee status.

2.2 Formulation of research hypotheses

Starting from the research question, we formulated two hypotheses aimed to help us reach the study objective.

H1: Work flexibility is expressed through different flexible work arrangements that may contribute to increase in employment.

Various flexible work arrangements have been gradually designed and implemented depending on the country's economic conditions, the organisation's field of work, employees' preferences, etc. Although work flexibility poses some difficulties in the process of managing personnel, employers apply these flexible work arrangements to ensure the needed level of personnel. As employees' values and family-related responsibilities are changing, organisations should take into account such issues for retaining employees, and attracting new ones showing a preference for flexible work arrangements, compared to standard work arrangements. Therefore, the management should consider the market trends and implement various flexible work arrangements that could indirectly contribute to employment growth.

H2: Flexible work arrangements differ in intensity, depending on organisation size.

Flexible work arrangements may be implemented differently, depending on organisation size. Several flexible work arrangements can be implemented in large organisations, and fewer in small ones. This is why the degree of intensity of flexible work arrangements is expressed differently. If some flexible work arrangements could have the same intensity in both large and small organisations, high discrepancies could appear in the case of other arrangements.

2.3 Questionnaire design

To validate the hypotheses formulated in the previous phase, a questionnaire was built, the respondents being local employers. The questionnaire included ten items: 1. "Temporary employment", 2. "Flexi-time work", 3. "Part-time work", 4. "Weekend work" 5. "Casual work", 6. "Remote work", 7. "Work on digital platforms", 8. "Job rotation", 9 "Job sharing" and 10. "Promoting an active employee relations policy". Respondents had to assess each item on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is total disagreement and 5 is total agreement.

2.4 Sample, data collection and preliminary processing

The questionnaire targeted employers operating in the Republic of Moldova. The community for calculating the sample comprised enterprises having more than 10 employees. In this sense, we requested from the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova a list of employers who had submitted their financial reports. From the total number of 7728 employers with more than 10 employees, we excluded 430 public enterprises and 55 companies undergoing an insolvency procedure. Therefore, the sample was extracted from a final number of 7243 employers. To set the sample, the following formula was applied:

$$n = \frac{z^2 * \overline{s^2}}{(e*\mu)^2 + \frac{z^2 * \overline{s^2}}{N}} \quad (1)$$

Thus, the total size of the sample comprised 611 enterprises. During data collection, some respondents refused to answer the questions. Finally, there were 350 respondents (employers). The rate of non-answers amounted to 43%. The respondents included human resources managers in the case of large and middle-sized enterprises, and company managers in the case of small enterprises.

Data were processed using SPSS software. The structure of respondents is presented in Table 1.

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Table 1 | Respondent structure

Respondent structure	Number	%
Up to 9 employees	62	17.7
10-49 employees	100	28.6
50-249 employees	105	30.0
Over 250 employees	83	23.7
Total	**350**	**100**
Rural	78	22.3
Urban	272	77.7
Total	**350**	**100**
Agriculture	42	12.0
Commerce and services	78	22.3
Industry	70	20.0
Construction	16	4.5
Transport	22	6.3
Information and communication	11	3.1
Hotels and restaurants	15	4.3
Financial activities	43	12.3
Education	5	1.4
Health and social care	11	3.1
Public administration	6	1.7
Other activities	31	8.9
Total	**350**	**100**

Source: Authors

Although the survey did not include enterprises with up to 9 employees (micro-enterprises), 62 respondents were from this category. It could be explained by the fact that some enterprises at the limit of 10-12 employees reduced their operations, which led to their inclusion in the micro-enterprise category. The COVID-19 pandemic crisis influenced the operations of many enterprises leading to reduction in operations, and cuts in personnel numbers.

We were also concerned at this stage of the study about the internal consistency of the set of items defining flexible work arrangements in an organisation. For this purpose, Cronbach's alpha consistency coefficient was calculated, being reported by the literature in the field as the most frequently used coefficient (Christmann & Van Aelst, 2006; ten Holt et al., 2010). The value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient could vary; no standard being set in this sense. Thus, values close to 0.90 are viewed as "excellent", closer to 0.80 as "very good", and around 0.70 as "adequate" (Kline, 2005). In our study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.789, which indicated a good level of consistency of the working instrument.

2.5 Data analysis methods and research hypothesis validation

To outline the most important flexible work arrangements and validate the first hypothesis, we used principal component analysis (PCA). It is a multivariate descriptive method aimed to summarise the analysed data and identify their common nature (Lebart et al., 2006). Considering the ten items included in the questionnaire Xi (i = 1, n; n = 10) and by applying

the PCA method, we exclude collinearity and calculate a set of new variables, named components and calculated using the relation:

$$C_j = \beta j1X1 + \beta j2X2 + \cdots + \beta jiXi + \cdots + \beta j1nX \quad (2)$$

The *Cj* components comply with the independence hypothesis that could be validated using the χ^2 statistical test by means of KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) statistics, which is used to calculate the intensity of the relations of the *Xi* variables (Jaba, 2002; Jaba and Robu, 2011). KMO statistics takes values in the interval [0.1], where "0" indicates the absence of a relation between the initial variables, while value "1" indicates the existence of a significant relation (Lebart et al., 2006). Table 2 presents the values of KMO and χ^2 statistics for our study.

Table 2 | Values of KMO and χ^2 statistics

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy		.796
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approx. chi-squared	864.276
	Df	45
	Sig.	.000

Source: Processed by authors using SPSS 22.0

The value of the chi-squared test is 864.276. The likelihood of this test is 0.000, being lower that the undertaken risk of 0.05. Thus, there is a likelihood of 0.95 that there are significant statistical relations between the statistical variables, the matrix of correlations not being a unit matrix. Plus, the table above indicates that the value of the KMO statistics is 0.796, indicating a good solution obtained by applying PCA.

To analyse the flexible work arrangements by enterprises size and to validate the second hypothesis, the following strategy was adopted:

- we applied the ANOVA procedure to test the differences for three dimensions of work flexibility among the groups of organisations defined by size;
- we applied the post-hoc procedure to systematically test the differences between all the pairs of means when ANOVA is significant.

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3 Results and Discussion

The study results prove that flexible work arrangements are assessed differently by the study participants (Table 3).

Table 3 | List of items included in sample reflecting flexible work arrangements

Flexible work arrangements	Mean	Std. deviation	Sum
X_1 – *Temporary employment*	3.4029	1.49517	1191.00
X_2 - *Part-time work*	3.1514	1.41317	1103.00
X_3 – *Flexi-time work*	3.3000	1.55095	1155.00
X_4 – *Job rotation*	2.8686	1.43229	1004.00
X_5 – *Job sharing*	2.5800	1.42758	903.00
X_6 – *Remote work*	3.4171	1.54317	1196.00
X_7 – *Weekend work*	1.9143	1.25927	670.00
X_8 – *Casual work*	2.0514	1.24973	718.00
X_9 – *Work on digital platforms*	2.7771	1.51082	972.00
X_{10} - *Promoting an active employee relations policy*	3.9229	1.30342	1373.00

Source: Processed by authors using SPSS 22.0

Temporary employment was assessed by a mean of 3.4029, while the standard deviation was 1.49517. Out of the total respondents, almost one-third totally agreed with this flexible work arrangement. Although temporary employment could bring difficulties to enterprises, and the personnel administration process could also cause higher staff fluctuation, the employers use it to cover short-term staff shortage. Temporary employment was also studied in newly founded Portuguese companies (Damas de Matos, 2016).

Part-time work amounted to 3.1514, with a standard deviation of 1.41317. Around 23% of the respondents totally agreed and 18.6% totally disagreed with this flexible work arrangement. Thus, employers like part-time work less as it brings some inconveniences related to personnel administration at the workplace. It is also a solution for covering jobs that are scarce on the labour market and for maintaining specific categories of workforce in the employment area.

On average, flexi-time work reached an assessment of 3.300, with a standard deviation of 1.55095. As in the case of fixed-term work, a third of the respondents agreed with this arrangement. At the opposite end are 22% of respondents who totally disagreed with it. Flexi-time work was analysed from the perspective of employee representation in European private companies (Burdin & Perotin, 2019).

Job rotation and job sharing are flexible work arrangements that were less appreciated by the employers. In the case of job rotation, the mean amounted to 2.8686, with a standard deviation of 1.43229, while job sharing was given 2.5800 (standard deviation 1.42758). For

local enterprises, job rotation and job sharing are less encountered in managerial practice and that is why the appreciation is lower compared to other flexible work arrangements. Only 17.43% of the respondents totally agreed with the application of job rotation and 12.86% totally agreed with job sharing. We may also note that job rotation and job sharing may contribute to higher employment nationwide.

Remote work is the flexible work arrangement that was given high appreciation with a mean of 3.4171 (standard deviation 1.54317). Out of the total respondents, almost 37% totally agreed with it, while one-fifth totally disagreed. The high appreciation of remote work by employers could be the result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced enterprises organise remote work and managers change their attitude towards this arrangement of work organization. Remote work grew significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, being assessed from the perspective of both employees (Arnts et al., 2022) and employers in terms of opportunities given to new employees to work remotely (Bamieh & Ziegler, 2022).

Weekend work and casual work are the two flexible work arrangements that were appreciated the least by the employers. The calculated mean for weekend work was 1.9143 (standard deviation 1.25927). Almost 57% totally disagreed and only 6.8% totally agreed with it. Concerning casual work, it was appreciated by a mean of 2.0514 (standard deviation 1.24973). The study results show that almost 50% totally disagreed and only 6.6% agreed with casual work. It is more difficult for enterprises to manage these two flexible work arrangements, and in the case of labour shortage, they may generate even higher instability of personnel.

Work on digital platforms amounted to 2.7771 (standard deviation 1.51082). It is not very clear for many local employers what it means, and due to this, the appreciation was low. Out of the total respondents, 31.7% totally disagreed and only 19.1% totally agreed with it. The low level of digitisation of professional activities makes some enterprises sceptical in implementing this flexible work arrangement. In this context, some studies have investigated policies improving digital abilities of less educated population aimed at promoting inclusive growth and welfare (Oikonomou et al., 2023).

Out of all the flexible work arrangements included in the study, promoting an active employee relation policy had the highest appreciation with a mean of 3.9229 and standard deviation of 1.30342. Out of all the respondents, almost 50% totally agreed with this activity, which is more known by local companies.

Starting from the ten flexible work arrangements, we used the PCA method in order to identify the main components of work flexibility. By applying the varimax rotation, we may observe the decomposition of the total variance of the data set on three factor axes: the first factor axis explains 22.13% of the total variance of the dotted cloud, the second one explains 22.01% and the third one 15.48%. The three factor axes explain together 59.62% of the total variance (Table 4).

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Table 4 | Own values of correlation matrix and variance explained by factor axes

Component	Initial eigenvalues			Rotation sums of squared loadings		
	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	**3.508**	35.075	35.075	2.213	22.126	22.126
2	**1.370**	13.701	48.776	2.201	22.011	44.138
3	**1.084**	10.840	59.615	1.548	15.478	59.615
4	0.910	9.103	68.718			
5	0.731	7.309	76.028			
6	0.627	6.267	82.295			
7	0.501	5.010	87.304			
8	0.459	4.593	91.897			
9	0.436	4.357	96.254			
10	0.375	3.746	100.000			

Source: Processed by authors using SPSS 22.0

Considering the Kaizer criterion, we selected to interpret the first three factor axes that have super unit eigenvalues (Table 4). We may note from Table 4 a reduction in the initial set of ten items describing work flexibility within organisation in three principal components.

The coordinates of variables (items) represent the coefficients of the linear equation of relationships among the variables.

$$C_1 = 0.851 \times X_7 + 0.713 \times X_8 + 0.625 \times X_5 + 0.517 \times X_4 + 0.104 \times X_6 + 0.407 \times X_9 + 0.001 \times X_{10} + 0.098 \times X_3 + 0.053 \times X_1 + 0.364 \times X_2$$

$$C_2 = -0.228 \times X_7 + 0.190 \times X_8 + 0.052 \times X_5 + 0.296 \times X_4 + 0.803 \times X_6 + 0.711 \times X_9 + 0.652 \times X_{10} + 0.638 \times X_3 + 0.062 \times X_1 + 0.296 \times X_2$$

$$C_2 = -0.044 \times X_7 + 0.097 \times X_8 + 0.275 \times X_5 + 0.186 \times X_4 + 0.107 \times X_6 + 0.023 \times X_9 + 0.068 \times X_{10} + 0.366 \times X_3 + 0.884 \times X_1 + 0.703 \times X_2$$

Table 5 shows the variable components by three principal components. In the case of high values of the variable coordinate on the factor axes, the variable is highly correlated with the respective factor axis. Therefore, the first factor axis (principal component C_1) is highly positively correlated with items: X_7 – Weekend work, X_8 – Casual work, X_5 – Job sharing and X_4 – Job rotation. There is a direct strong relationship among these flexible work arrangements. This factor axis could be defined as a component of work flexibility explained by casual work and job rotation.

Table 5 | Variable coordinates by three principle components

Rotated component matrix[a]			
	Component		
	1	2	3
X_7 – Weekend work	0.851	-0.028	-0.044
X_8 – Casual work	0.713	0.190	0.097
X_5 – Job sharing	0.625	0.052	0.275
X_4 – Job rotation	0.517	0.296	0.186
X_6 - Remote work	0.104	0.803	0.107
X_9 - Work on digital platforms	0.407	0.711	-0.023
X_{10} - Promoting an active employee relations policy	0.000	0.652	0.068
X_3 – Flexi-time work	0.098	0.638	0.366
X_1 - Temporary employment	0.053	0.062	0.884
X_2 – Part-time work	0.364	0.296	0.703
Extraction method: principal component analysis. Rotation method: varimax with Kaiser normalization.			
a. Rotation converged in 4 iterations.			

Source: Processed by authors using SPSS 22.0

The representative variables for the second factor axis (principal component C_2) are the following: X_6 – Remote work, X_9 – Work on digital platforms, X_{10} – Promoting an active employee relations policy and X_3 – Flexi-time work. This factor axis may be defined as a component of work flexibility explained by flexi-time work and remote work.

The highly correlated variables with the third factor axis (principal component C_3) comprise X_1 – Temporary employment and X_2 – Part-time work. This factor axis may be defined as a component of work flexibility explained by fixed-term employment and part-time work.

Therefore, the respondents evaluated the flexible work arrangements differently by means of the assigned score. By applying principle component analysis as a method of statistical research, we managed to group the flexible work arrangements into three components which differ among each other. Therefore, the first research hypothesis is validated.

The conducted analysis shows that flexible work arrangements are appreciated differently, depending on organization size (Appendix 1). Comparing the results for each flexible work arrangement by its mean, we found several differentiations for temporary employment, the greatest differences being found between micro-enterprises (mean 3.500) and medium-sized enterprises (3.3619). The most evident differences in part-time work are between enterprises

with up to 9 employees (3.4355) and small companies (10–49 employees), who appreciated this arrangement by 2.9900. Flexi-time work got the highest appreciation by micro-enterprises (3.5161), the lowest being given by large enterprises (3.1928). As for job rotation, the biggest differences appear between large enterprises (3.0602) and medium-sized enterprises (2.5714). Micro-enterprises also gave highest appreciation to job sharing (2.8226), which is 0.45 points more than the lowest mean points given by medium-sized enterprises. Remote work got a mean score of 3.6867 from large enterprises, being 0.5 points more than that of micro-enterprises. Concerning weekend work, the highest appreciation of 2.2097 was given by micro-enterprises and the lowest (1.7143) by medium-sized enterprises, similarly to casual work. The most evident difference appears between these two categories of enterprises (Appendix 1). Regarding work on digital platforms, the greatest difference is between large (3.0361) and medium-sized enterprises (2.6667). Active employee relations policy was given the highest appreciation by large enterprises (4.3494). The mean is over 0.6 points higher than that of micro-enterprises (3.7419).

Starting from the three main components presented above, the ANOVA method was applied to see to what degree enterprise size is a significant factor for the elements of work flexibility (Table 6).

Table 6 | Results of ANOVA application

Principal components		Sum of squares	*df*	Mean square	*F*	Sig.
C_1 – Casual work / Job rotation	Between groups	12.343	3	4.114	4.228	**0.006**
	Within groups	336.657	346	0.973		
	Total	349.000	349			
C_2 – Flex-time work / Remote work	Between groups	8.130	3	2.710	2.751	**0.043**
	Within groups	340.870	346	0.985		
	Total	349.000	349			
C_3 – Fixed-term employment / Part-time work	Between groups	1.631	3	0.544	0.542	0.654
	Within groups	347.369	346	1.004		
	Total	349.000	349			

Source: Processed by authors using SPSS 22.0

Small enterprises attribute greater importance to casual work and job rotation. The C_1 component of work flexibility is stronger in smaller enterprises than in those with a higher number of employees.

Concerning the C_2 component of work flexibility, we observe a higher use of remote work and flexi-time work in larger enterprises. The higher the number of employees in the enterprise,

the more possibilities exist for making remote work arrangements, including on digital platforms.

For the C_3 component of work flexibility, there is a higher preference for part-time work in enterprises with up to 9 employees, compared to larger enterprises, which show less interest in this option.

We also systematically tested the differences among all the sub-samples of enterprises defined by size (by number of employees) using the post-hoc tests in ANOVA. Thus, we compared all pairs of two means for C_1 and C_2 components of work flexibility for which ANOVA indicated a significant effect of organisation size on work flexibility (Table 7).

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Table 7 | Results of post-hoc tests in ANOVA procedure for two principal components

Dependent variable	(I) Organization size	(J) Organization size	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. error	Sig.
C_1 – Casual work / Job rotation	Up to 9 employees	10–49 employees	0.20805632	0.15944744	0.193
		50–249 employees	0.52725480*	0.15798783	**0.001**
		Over 250 employees	0.37869997*	0.16557890	**0.023**
	10–49 employees	Up to 9 employees	-0.20805632	0.15944744	0.193
		50–249 employees	0.31919848*	0.13782823	**0.021**
		Over 250 employees	0.17064364	0.14646788	0.245
	50–249 employees	Up to 9 employees	-0.52725480*	0.15798783	**0.001**
		10–49 employees	-0.31919848*	0.13782823	**0.021**
		Over 250 employees	-0.14855483	0.14487756	0.306
	Over 250 employees	Up to 9 employees	-0.37869997*	0.16557890	**0.023**
		10–49 employees	-0.17064364	0.14646788	0.245
		50–249 employees	0.14855483	0.14487756	0.306
C_2 – Flexi-time work / Remote work	Up to 9 employees	10–49 employees	-0.03449207	0.16044207	0.830
		50–249 employees	-0.15084590	0.15897335	0.343
		Over 250 employees	-0.40508828*	0.16661178	**0.016**
	10–49 employees	Up to 9 employees	0.03449207	0.16044207	0.830
		50–249 employees	-0.11635383	0.13868799	0.402
		Over 250 employees	-0.37059621*	0.14738154	**0.012**
	50–249 employees	Up to 9 employees	0.15084590	0.15897335	0.343
		10–49 employees	0.11635383	0.13868799	0.402
		Over 250 employees	-0.25424238	0.14578130	**0.082**
	Over 250 employees	Up to 9 employees	0.40508828*	0.16661178	**0.016**
		10–49 employees	0.37059621*	0.14738154	**0.012**
		50–249 employees	0.25424238	0.14578130	**0.082**

Source: Processed by authors using SPSS 22.0

From the results for the C_1 component of work flexibility in Table 7, there are significant differences between enterprises with up to 9 employees and other groups of enterprises with over 50 employees. We may also note significant differences between enterprises with 10–49 employees and those with 50–249 employees. For the second C_2 component of work flexibility, there are significant differences between enterprises having over 250 employees and the other groups of enterprises under 250 employees. As for the third C_3 component of work flexibility, namely, *part time*, there are no significant differences by enterprise size.

Out of the multitude of variables reflecting work flexibility, we have identified three principal components. The first principal component was explained by casual work and job rotation of employees. Therefore, work was significantly influenced by casual work and job rotation. Casual work and job rotation, having been valued more in enterprises with up to 10 employees, may also be explained by the line of business, operating mainly in retail. The COVID-19 period affected mostly this area, most respondents opting for such flexible work arrangements. Considering the fact that the operations of small enterprises are less stable compared to large enterprises, casual work enabled them to employ more vulnerable workforce available on the labour market.

The second principal component is expressed through flexi-time work and remote work. The larger the organisation, the more it appreciates flexi-time and remote work. By applying these flexible work arrangements, senior management has managed to retain employees, who have not been at risk of losing their jobs. Large enterprises also have more opportunities to make remote work arrangements by developing a proper infrastructure. As there are several jobs for the same position, remote work can be organised by alternating the work done by employees at home or at the employer's office. The same applies when we talk about flexi-time work. Small enterprises have fewer opportunities for practising these flexible work arrangements, thus becoming less attractive for employees with more responsibilities outside work.

The third principal component is characterised by temporary employment and part-time work. We should underline that there are no significant differences for this principal component among enterprises. It shows that enterprises use temporary employment and part-time work equally to cover their need for personnel, providing the opportunity for some workers to work part-time if they are not able to work full-time. Temporary employment is a flexible work arrangement enabling enterprises to cover their needs for short-term personnel, irrespective of their size. For exceeding workforce, temporary employment is a stepping stone as employees gain work experience during this interval, increasing their chances of getting a permanent position. Nationally, temporary employment leads to growth in employment.

The results show that the respondents gave higher or lower scores to flexible work arrangements depending on the size of the enterprise. By applying the ANOVA procedure, we found more evident variations of the score for job rotation, casual work, flexi-time work and remote work. No score variation for temporary work and part-time work was found. Therefore, the second hypothesis is partially validated.

Conclusion

Flexible work arrangements are a significant element of work flexibility and may have a direct impact on employment. The evaluation of flexible work arrangements by employers expresses their attitude, which could be important in taking future decisions related to work organisation. Each flexible work arrangement is also seen differently depending on each company's size, defined as the number of employees.

From another perspective, flexible work arrangements are implemented nationwide in order to provide more opportunities for the workforce to gain the employee status, including those considered vulnerable on the labour market. Specific flexible work arrangements (temporary work, casual work or weekend work) help these categories of workers acquire professional experience and find a more stable and secure employment.

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Temporary employment and part-time work are flexible work arrangements that were given the highest scores by the respondents. This fact shows the openness of local enterprises to implementing such practices in their activities, providing categories of people who are unable to have a standard work schedule with an opportunity to benefit from the employee status. Thus, enterprises contribute indirectly to higher employment at the national level.

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the attitude of employees towards remote work, shown by a relatively high score received by local enterprises. It shows that the employers are open to remote work as a type of work arrangement, providing categories of people who are unable to be present at work daily due to personal or family reasons with the chance to attain the employee status. Similarly to remote work, flexi-time work was given a relatively high score by the enterprises. By implementing these two types of flexible work arrangements, enterprises contribute to employment growth at the national level.

Our findings prove that flexible work arrangements that were less-known to local employers, such as job rotation, job sharing and work on digital platforms, were given a lower score. Although job rotation and job sharing are more specific to large enterprises, they were appreciated less.

Weekend work and casual work were also less valued. It could be due to the fact that these involve difficulties in managing personnel. On the other hand, these two flexible work arrangements could be a solution for many enterprises, especially when there is a workforce shortage on the labour market.

Enterprises should also understand that employees' preferences related to flexible work arrangements change. Many employees give up their jobs, especially due to standard work schedules preventing them from undertaking family or professional duties. Therefore, enterprises should be more flexible and adapt to new developments by rethinking the opportunity of adopting flexible work arrangements that may contribute to attraction and retention of human resources.

In line with the interests of employees and employers, flexible work arrangements provide benefits for both parties. That is why these flexible work arrangements should be regulated and promoted, so that they could be implemented and extended, especially for categories of workers having greater difficulties finding a job. For enterprises, the implementation of flexible work arrangements (part-time, temporary employment, casual work, weekend work) could be seen as a measure of social responsibility, contributing to higher employment at the macroeconomic level.

Research limitations

The first research limitation lies in the fact that work flexicurity is characterised by four main elements leading to higher level of employment, and only three elements can be analysed in terms of organisational behaviour. In our study, we focused on the first element, work flexibility, expressed through flexible work arrangements. In a future study, we aim to analyse the other two elements of flexicurity in organisations. This way we will be able to provide a holistic assessment of organisational behaviour in terms of flexicurity, having a direct impact on employment.

The second limitation is the fact that the appreciation of flexible work arrangements was mainly done in relation to company size. The assessment of flexible work arrangements by type of business could give us additional insight, and help us identify and shape specific trends in the development of flexible work arrangements, considering the structure of national economy.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 | List of items analysed in sample reflecting flexible work arrangements by company size

		Descriptives					
		N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error	95% confidence interval for mean	
						Lower bound	Upper bound
Temporary employment	Up to 9 employees	62	3.5000	1.36406	0.17324	3.1536	3.8464
	10–49 employees	100	3.3900	1.48321	0.14832	3.0957	3.6843
	50–249 employees	105	3.3619	1.58189	0.15438	3.0558	3.6680
	Over 250 employees	83	3.3976	1.51368	0.16615	3.0671	3.7281
	Total	350	3.4029	1.49517	0.07992	3.2457	3.5600
Part-time work	Up to 9 employees	62	3.4355	1.33823	0.16995	3.0956	3.7753
	10–49 employees	100	2.9900	1.38166	0.13817	2.7158	3.2642
	50–249 employees	105	3.0857	1.36660	0.13337	2.8212	3.3502
	Over 250 employees	83	3.2169	1.54642	0.16974	2.8792	3.5545
	Total	350	3.1514	1.41317	0.07554	3.0029	3.3000
Flexi-time work	Up to 9 employees	62	3.5161	1.52296	0.19342	3.1294	3.9029
	10–49 employees	100	3.2400	1.40791	0.14079	2.9606	3.5194
	50–249 employees	105	3.3143	1.55856	0.15210	3.0127	3.6159
	Over 250 employees	83	3.1928	1.72823	0.18970	2.8154	3.5701
	Total	350	3.3000	1.55095	0.08290	3.1370	3.4630
Job rotation	Up to 9 employees	62	3.0161	1.41990	0.18033	2.6555	3.3767
	10–49 employees	100	2.9300	1.39447	0.13945	2.6533	3.2067
	50–249 employees	105	2.5714	1.40642	0.13725	2.2993	2.8436
	Over 250 employees	83	3.0602	1.48447	0.16294	2.7361	3.3844
	Total	350	2.8686	1.43229	0.07656	2.7180	3.0191
Job sharing	Up to 9 employees	62	2.8226	1.38522	0.17592	2.4708	3.1744

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	10–49 employees	100	2.6700	1.41461	0.14146	2.3893	2.9507
	50–249 employees	105	2.3714	1.46272	0.14275	2.0884	2.6545
	Over 250 employees	83	2.5542	1.41639	0.15547	2.2449	2.8635
	Total	350	2.5800	1.42758	0.07631	2.4299	2.7301
Remote work	Up to 9 employees	62	3.1774	1.54203	0.19584	2.7858	3.5690
	10–49 employees	100	3.2600	1.47450	0.14745	2.9674	3.5526
	50–249 employees	105	3.4952	1.54499	0.15078	3.1962	3.7942
	Over 250 employees	83	3.6867	1.59975	0.17560	3.3374	4.0361
	Total	350	3.4171	1.54317	0.08249	3.2549	3.5794
Weekend work	Up to 9 employees	62	2.2097	1.30745	0.16605	1.8776	2.5417
	10–49 employees	100	2.0000	1.27128	0.12713	1.7477	2.2523
	50–249 employees	105	1.7143	1.16614	0.11380	1.4886	1.9400
	Over 250 employees	83	1.8434	1.29240	0.14186	1.5612	2.1256
	Total	350	1.9143	1.25927	0.06731	1.7819	2.0467
Casual work	Up to 9 employees	62	2.4194	1.43205	0.18187	2.0557	2.7830
	10–49 employees	100	2.1500	1.16667	0.11667	1.9185	2.3815
	50–249 employees	105	1.8571	1.15549	0.11276	1.6335	2.0808
	Over 250 employees	83	1.9036	1.26505	0.13886	1.6274	2.1798
	Total	350	2.0514	1.24973	0.06680	1.9200	2.1828
Work on digital platforms	Up to 9 employees	62	2.7742	1.43057	0.18168	2.4109	3.1375
	10–49 employees	100	2.6800	1.43464	0.14346	2.3953	2.9647
	50–249 employees	105	2.6667	1.51065	0.14742	2.3743	2.9590
	Over 250 employees	83	3.0361	1.64869	0.18097	2.6761	3.3961
	Total	350	2.7771	1.51082	0.08076	2.6183	2.9360
Promoting an active	Up to 9 employees	62	3.7419	1.40182	0.17803	3.3859	4.0979

employee relations policy	10–49 employees	100	3.8300	1.27964	0.12796	3.5761	4.0839
	50–249 employees	105	3.7810	1.42762	0.13932	3.5047	4.0572
	Over 250 employees	83	4.3494	0.98071	0.10765	4.1353	4.5635
	Total	350	3.9229	1.30342	0.06967	3.7858	4.0599

Source: Authors

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