

Exploring the use of flex-time by a media company in
New Delhi

by
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VANCOUVER ISLAND
UNIVERSITY

EXPLORING THE USE OF FLEX-TIME BY A MEDIA COMPANY IN NEW DELHI

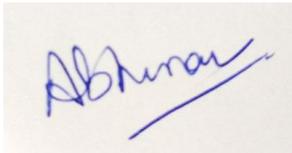
**BY
ABHINAV VERMA**

Presented as part of the requirement for the award of MA Degree in
Sustainable Leisure Management within the Department of Recreation
and Tourism Management at Vancouver Island University

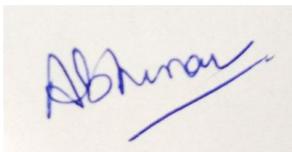
June, 2016

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ABSTRACT

Although the concept of flex-time has been introduced in work organizations for some time, there is a lack of research that highlights the specific reasons for employees choosing to use or not use the option of flex-time. Therefore, the aim of this research was to investigate specific reasons for employees making the decision for choosing the option of flex-time, and to find out if these decisions are influenced by sustainability (e.g. to reduce carbon foot print incurred while travelling to work, optimal use of office and employee resources), leisure (engaging in any activity for the sake of the wellbeing of the individual), or lifestyle (work-life balance, choosing a lifestyle which allows proper prioritization between work leisure, and other non-work activities) . This study focuses on the employee's perspective more than the employer's perspective. The organization chosen to conduct the research was The Hindustan Times in New Delhi, India. Semi-structured interviews were conducted within a sample of eight participants. The study employed the Theory of Planned Behavior, as a model for organizing and explaining the factors that appear to be influencing why some respondents chose to participate in flex time, while others chose not to participate. The results suggested that, the primary reasons for choosing flex-time for these eight participant in The Hindustan Times was a) leisure b) sustainability c) lifestyle d) other (e.g. productivity, marital status, and technology) . It was concluded, in order for flex-time to be sustainable in The Hindustan Times, in terms of reduction of carbon imprint by optimum utilization of resources by employees, it has to be designed as per the nature of the job.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction

The concept of sustainability can be defined as “the ability to meet the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs,” (Morelli, 2011, p.8). More specifically, sustainability is defined as a condition of balance, resilience, and interconnectedness that allows human society to satisfy its needs while neither exceeding the capacity of its supporting ecosystems to continue to regenerate the services necessary to meet those needs nor by our actions diminishing biological diversity (McKenzie, 2004). Organizations engaged in sustainability use strategies that simultaneously create economic value and integrate concerns for the human communities in which they operate the ecosystems where they have an impact. (Loucks, Martens & Cho, 2010).

Workplace sustainability on the other hand is defined as “the ability to conserve and optimally use the resources of the organization as well the employee’s resources and time as well” (Morelli, 2013, p.4). Christensen et al. (2007) states that companies need to consider how their actions can harm the environment; they must give the same concern in caring for people. Therefore it is imperative that companies need to implement the concept of workplace sustainability. Pfeffer (2010) stresses the need to emphasize workplace sustainability, as protection of the health and welfare of employees directly impacts the ability to sustain the environment and the economy.

Ennals (2001) states that one of the ways workplace sustainability could be achieved is the use of flex-time by the employees. Flex-time refers to "the ability of workers to make choices influencing when, where, and for how long they engage in work-related

tasks" (Hill et al., 2008, p. 152) in a way that allows them to integrate work with other life roles such as family or leisure (Kossek & Van Dyne, 2008). Kossek & Van Dyne, (2008) also suggests that employees have the desire to be sustainable and they need to be given an opportunity to be sustainable. However, the desire to select flex-time may be influenced by other factors such as leisure needs or work-life balance (lifestyle) (Latona, 2015). The purpose of this study is to explore flex-time and the factors that may influence people to select flex-time.

Among possible reasons, one factor that may influence the desire for flex-time is leisure. The concept of leisure depends on the availability of time in which the individual can undertake wide variety of activities. For example, leisure can be very active – such as cycling, sailing, or jogging. But, at the same time leisure can be somewhat passive, such as reading, watching a film, or just relaxing. Therefore, leisure is considered primarily as a condition, sometimes referred to as a state of well-being. It is an attitude of mind or a quality of experience. According to Cushman and Laidler (1990, p.1): “It is distinguished by the individual’s perceived freedom to act and distinguished from conditions imposed by necessity. It is assumed to be pleasurable and, although it may appeal because of certain anticipated benefits, it is intrinsically motivated. It is an end in itself and valuable for its own sake”. Leisure can be defined as a time for self-exploration to reinvent, refocus and recharge oneself by engaging in any activities of one’s preferred choice (Leitner and Leitner, 2012). Engaging in any leisure activity is always voluntary, not obligatory. Major purposes of participation are enjoyment, fun, personal satisfaction, and revitalization (Leitner and Leitner, 2012, p. 658).

The pressure of an increasingly demanding work culture in the organization is perhaps the biggest and most pressing challenge to the mental health of the employees (Mark and Smith, 2012). The cumulative effect of increased working hours has a critical effect on the lifestyle of employees working in any organization (McGillivray, 2005), including the leisure aspect of lifestyle. Trenberth and Drewe (2005) suggest that employees who engage in leisure activities were able to reduce their stress levels at work. Leisure can also be viewed as a 'coping strategy' as it may involve family support, hobbies and other non-work activities (Trenberth and Drewe, 2005). Trenberth and Drewe (2005) focus on the idea of escape in their study, stating that escapism tends to refer to activities where people try to distract their attention away from work and its potential to cause stress.

Stress and health have been closely associated. Leisure plays an important role in wellbeing and good health. One of the key ways in which leisure is thought to be helpful is in its ability to cut tension and stress. However, at the same time for employees to get leisure time there needs to be an actual availability of time and opportunity to engage in leisure activities, as leisure and time availability goes hand in hand (Zuzanek et al., 2006). From the above definitions, it can be inferred that leisure is an activity which can be engaged in, when there is availability of time for the wellbeing of the individual. Related to leisure is the concept of lifestyle choices (i.e. work-life balance). Lifestyle choices can be defined as a way of living as individuals, families (households), and societies, which they manifest in coping with their physical, psychological, social, and economic environments on a day-to-day basis (Contoyannis and Jones, 2004). A lifestyle choice is a state of equilibrium where an employee is able to achieve balance between the primary priorities of employees of employment and their non-work

activities. The balance is between the career oriented work and the personal life of the employee outside the business environment. This is also known as work-life balance (Sturges and Guest, 2004). Lifestyle choices and leisure choices for individuals are different as lifestyle choice means a commitment to certain way of living that involves work, leisure, and other aspects of living whereas leisure is an opportunity to engage in any activity which provides enjoyment and has a focus on non-work aspects of life (Stebbins, 2005). Leisure could be engaging in any activity in one's free time. For example, engaging in yoga or reading a book could be a leisure activity. Kossek (1989) also states that employees tend to choose flex-time as a result of their lifestyle choices, wherein leisure activity could be part of that choice. According to Kossek (1989) leisure can be considered as a subset of lifestyle.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The purpose of implementing flex-time is that it provides organizations and their employees the ability to make choices about when (e.g., compressed work weeks), where (e.g. telecommuting), and for how long (e.g. part-time, reduced hours) work-related activities are accomplished. These types of work arrangements have seen a rise in popularity due to a change in workforce demographics and employee demands for greater work-life balance (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2002). As a result, many organizations have implemented flex-time in an effort to retain and attract qualified employees (Rajudi, 2012). Golden (2008) states that research so far suggests that there could be various reasons as to why employees may use flex-time, including: to recruit employees, to keep employees loyal to their organizations, and to increase productivity (Kelly and Kalev, 2006). However for optimum use of flex-time it is necessary to better

understand precise reasons as to why employees choose flex-time and why employers implement flex-time (Semler, 2004).

Hence it is fair to say that there is a lack of research that highlights the specific reasons for employees utilizing the option of flex-time, and whether factors such as sustainability, leisure, and lifestyle influence these decisions to use flex-time. Therefore we can assume that employees may not want to use the option of flex-time. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to find out the specific reason that employees make the decision to choose the option of flex-time, and to investigate whether sustainability, leisure, and lifestyle influence flex-time decisions. Employees making the decision not to choose the option of flex-time in their workplace will also be explored during this process. The focus is primarily on the employee's decisions rather than the employers, since flex-time is created for and used by the employees.

The underlying theory used to explain the behaviour and choices of employees was the Theory of Planned Behavior or "TPB" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). The TPB states that people make decisions about engaging in a given behavior (such as using flex-time) by reflecting on three factors; attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm concerning the behavior, and perceived control concerning the behavior. In this case, attitude refers to how good or bad a person feels about participating in flex time. Subjective norm refers to how much a person is influenced by important others (e.g. colleagues, family, or friends) to participate in flex time. Perceived control refers to the person's ability to undertake a flex time option (e.g. does the employment situation allows for flex-time).

1.3 Context of Research

The research used a case study of The Hindustan Times, an Indian-English language daily newspaper which was founded in 1924. It is the most read English newspaper in

India. This organization has been chosen because it is one of the few leading companies in the country which has implemented the concept of flex-time in India.

Also, the researcher had the opportunity to work in the organization therefore is familiar with the environment and the employees. As an employee of The Hindustan Times, the researcher observed that there were no known controversies or any risk involved regarding the implementation and use of flex-time. Flex-time was a newly implemented concept during this time in the organization. The concept created excitement but also confusion among the employees as they were unclear in understanding the employer's reasons for implementing flex-time. "Unlike the West, in the Indian context flexibility usually has to be negotiated", says Saundarya Rajesh, founder of Avtar Career Creators, a talent strategy consulting firm, and Flexi Careers India, which focuses on creating sustainable careers for women. "We found through a survey that 75 per cent of employees who managed to work flexible hours in Indian companies were actually allowed to do so by their bosses. It had nothing to do with company policy" (Times of India, 2014). The results of this particular study could be used to provide clarity in terms of how flex-time is perceived by Indian employees and can be used to further investigate it in other media houses in India.

1.4 Research Question

The main question that this study seeks to answer is "Why do employees choose flex-time in their work environment. Three of the possible explanations for choosing flex-time were explored in this study.

- Leisure: Employees may want to use flex-time as it could provide them leisure time. Flex-time can provide the employees an opportunity to engage in activities that they like, such as watching a movie or going shopping (Latona, 2015).

- Sustainable activities: Flex-time enables the employee's to be sustainable by using organization resources only when required. It also allows the employees to conserve their own resources such as saving fuel by utilizing transportation only when required. This leads to less traffic congestion and vehicle usage, thereby decreasing air pollution (Ennals, 2001).
- Lifestyle activities: Flex-time can also provide the employees to follow a certain kind of a lifestyle. Lifestyle can also refer to activities which are mix of employment, leisure, work-life balance and activities that is neither work nor leisure such as shopping (Contoyannis and Jones, 2004).

1.5 How this thesis relates to the Concept of Sustainable Leisure Management

The concept of sustainable leisure management can be defined as the ability to engage in leisure activities without harming the physical environment, social environment, or economic environment (McCool and Moisey, 2001). This research is relevant to the idea of sustainable leisure management as it deals with the concept of flexible working time in the work force, and how this benefits the concept of leisure as well as sustainable leisure living.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This research investigates the concept of why people do or don't use flex-time in the workforce and why employees use flex-time. While there is considerable literature examining why some companies chose to provide flex-time, little research examines the perspective of employees and their decision making about flex-time. This literature review helps us to understand the existing research that has been done in the field of employee flex-time, and how this study contributes to this understanding.

Conceptual Framework

To explain employee's choices regarding flex-time, the theory of planned behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010) was used.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) states that behavioural intentions (such as a person's choice to participate in flex time) is shaped by three factors; attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norm concerning the behaviour, and perceived control concerning the behaviour. In this case, attitude refers to how good or bad a person feels about participating in flex time. Subjective norm refers to how much a person is influenced by important others (e.g. colleagues, family, or friends) to participate in flex time. Perceived control refers to the person's ability to undertake a flex time option (e.g. does the employment situation allows for flex time).

Attitudes are developed through attitudinal beliefs, where attitudinal beliefs refer to the positive or negative consequences perceived to be associated with behaviour. Behavioural beliefs thus lead to the formation of individual attitudes regarding performance in behaviour. Subjective norms are described by Ajzen (2013) as one's

perceived social pressure to engage or not engage in behaviour. Perceived expectations and behaviours relating to important referent groups are assessed and associated with the individual's motivation to comply with the norms set out by such groups. Perceived behavioural control is seen as an individual's perception of their ability to engage in a particular behaviour. Ajzen (1991) argued that perceived behavioural control is developed through one's combined accessible control belief strength and control belief power, which indicate the presence of factors that may facilitate or interfere with one's engagement in the behaviour (Ajzen, 2005; 2012), such as clarity of company policies regarding flex time. While an individual may possess the intention to use flex-time, there may be factors beyond their control that hinder their actual engagement. Therefore, behavioural control is the extent to which the individual is actually able to participate in the behaviour.

TPB has been criticised for only focusing on rational decision making factors, where as human decision making process at times is irrational (Ajzen & Klobas, 2013).

TPB is a widely used and accepted approach to behavioural research, as depicted in the growing numbers of studies citing the theory. Ajzen (2011) states that at the beginning of 2010, TPB theory had cited 4550 times. In the context of this study, individual attitudes relating to flex-time, subjective norms of referent groups in the work and home domains and perceived behavioural control are likely to influence the intention of an employee to use flexitime (Veiga et al., 2004). This intention is then likely to lead to participation. The TPB is therefore useful in determining potential factors that predict the intention to use flexitime by employees.

2.1 History of Flex-time

The concept of a flexible working schedule was conceived at the German-based Messerschmitt-Boklow-ciohm-GMBH Aerospace Company (Stein, Cohen, & Gadon, 1976). This idea came about as a solution to the traffic congestion problem caused by a narrow road leading to the plant. When the company management was unable to convince the community to improve the road conditions, the employees decided to arrive and leave the plant at varying times in order to save time by avoiding traffic congestion. The management was impressed by the innovation of the employees adopting the concept, and thus the concept of flex time was born.

Soon the concept was adopted on a wider scale by organizations. By 1975, approximately 6,000 organizations in Europe had incorporated flex time (Ebbing, Gadon, & Gordon, 1975). The 70's were the birth of flex time and ever since then the concept and definition of flex time has continued to evolve. Organizations around the world now use flex time as an option for managing employee schedules (Rigby & Bilodeau, 2010).

The critical element of flex-time is whether or not an employee is allowed to make decisions as to when he/she works. No employer can program the commitment that an employee develops when he/she takes responsibility for themselves. Flexible working hours appeal to one's need for autonomy, and this is a common denominator that transcends culture (Mansfield, 2006, Barney and Elias, 2010). Working on fixed schedules could be monotonous and repetitive for the employees therefore leading to possible lack of productivity.

For employers, the flexible-hour system is a widely accepted, easily administered arrangement that can help promote the values, attitudes, behaviour, and habits that build

the trust necessary to support the quantity and quality of participation at work. It is not a system that will overcome an existing bad environment, but it has the potential of helping an organization move toward becoming a more participative, totally evolving entity. The concept of flex-time now is increasingly viewed as a means of providing a way to manage more effectively the working schedule of the employees and managing office space by sharing company's resources (Rigby & Bilodeau, 2010).

2.2 Major features of Flex-time in an Organization

Flexibility is increasingly viewed as a means of providing a way to manage time, space, and people more effectively (Olmsted and Smith, 1989). Elbing et al. (1978) observed that, the idea behind the concept of flex-time is to provide the workers some degree of freedom in establishing their work schedule. However, the degree of freedom is not defined by the flex-time concept, but is allowed to vary to a large extent based upon the prerogatives of each organization. Nonetheless, there are five major features which characterize flex-time (Golembiewski & Proehl, 1978; Brickey, 2002; Lambert, 2006)

- 1) Band width - total number of hours in the interval between the earliest possible starting time and the latest finishing time. The larger is the bandwidth, the greater the possible flexibility available to the employee.
- 2) Core Hours - total number of daily hours the employee must be at work. Longer core hours imply decreased flexibility of the program.
- 3) Length of Workweek - for hourly employees on a 40-hour week, unless overtime is authorized, flex-time permits only a choice of starting time which then determines the finishing hour. Generally, for all classes of employees, the shorter the workweek, the greater a program's flexibility.

- 4) Variability of Employee's Schedule - refers to employee's freedom to vary hours from day-to-day and week -to-week, without prior approval from supervisor. The greater is the variability and the less the need of prior approval, of course, the greater a program's flexibility.
- 5) Supervisor's Role - flex-time programs typically permit at least a supervisory override of an employee's schedule when "organization needs" require. Some programs prescribe a more direct, hands-on role for the supervisor in negotiating schedules, giving prior approval, determining minimum staffing levels, and so on. The greater the supervisor's hands on role, the less flexibility in a flex-time program.

2.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of Flex time

To gain a deeper understanding of the impact of flex-time upon the working environment, it is imperative that we consider both the employee's and the employer's perspectives. Hence, the advantages and disadvantages of flex-time are summarized according to its effect on both the employee and the employer (Ebbing, Gadon, & Gordon, 1974; Golembiewski, Hilles, & Yeager, 1975; Swart, 1978; Lambert, 2006; Rigby & Bilodeau, 2010).

2.3.1 Advantages to the employees.

The most obvious benefit to the employees is that it accords some degree of freedom in planning their work schedule. It also aids the employees in their coordination of personal and job roles. That is, it provides flexibility in dealing with domestic or personal issues which might conflict with traditional working hours. Parents are also benefactors as it provides them flexibility in their role as parents as well as employees.

Employee's performance may be enhanced by flex time as it gives the employees their space which is required for concentration. Also, the possibility of greater harmony between physical rhythms and the demands of the job may have positive ramifications. Employees covering for co-workers on different schedules have an opportunity to learn new skills. This cross training benefits the employee, the unit and the organization and provides potential coverage for peak periods, vacations and sick leaves (Rigby & Bilodeau, 2010).

Flex-time may increase employees desire to be more sustainable by giving them freedom to design their own working schedule. This allows employees to commute only when required to the office thereby reducing the commuting time and fuel resources. This also gives the employees the opportunity to use office resources only when required (Morelli, 2013).

Leisure is also one of the major advantages of flex time to employees, as it provides greater opportunities to employees for engaging in leisure time (Leitner and Leitner, 2012). The use of flex-time is associated with higher job satisfaction and productivity (Baltes et al., 1999) and moderates the relationship between the number of hours worked and the level of satisfaction with work-family balance (Valcour, 2007). Also employee recruitment and retention could also be considered as an advantage of flex time for the organization.

People who were in more of an authority figure position were more likely to use the option of flexibility, as opposed to people who were not in authority (Alysa et al., 2008). Alysa et al., (2008) explains multiple reasons why people who are in a position of authority, or who have tenure, have the feeling of superiority and the ability to use this position. The workers who are in this situation feel that they have the authority to make

such decisions, as opposed to employees who are lower in hierarchy. The employees who are lower in their hierarchical position within the business believe that they have less authority within an organization to be able to take time off, and hence are set to a fixed schedule as opposed to using the option of flex time (Alysa et al., 2008). Due to this, employees chose to use the option of flex time based on their position within a business, as opposed to other reasons such as lifestyle choices or leisure. This may also create an imbalance within an organization between the employees who feel that they have the authority to use flex time, as opposed to those that do not have such an authority. This aspect of only allowing certain groups to use flex time, has also been cited in Kossek, (1989) and Kossek, Lewis, & Hammer, L.B (2009).

Having the option of healthcare facilities at the area of work increases the demand for flex time to enjoy other leisure time activities. Employees tend to feel that if they have health care facilities on-site, then they can utilise their extra time to partake in leisure activities. This is supported by Schmidt & Duenas (2002), who did their study regarding the importance of having health care facilities for the employee and their family at the work office area itself. This process encouraged less time to be spent taking care of family health care obligations as the facilities will be readily available for the employee. When employees feel that their healthcare benefits were being taken care of by their employers, then they are more likely to continue working for the organization.

Researchers have investigated how flex time may be a beneficial to aid employees in being physically active and being healthy. Grzywacz, Casey, and Jones (2007), discovered that employee who were using the option of flex time at the workplace reported greater physical activity; this effect was most notable for those who strongly agreed with the statement “I have the flexibility I need to meet my work, personal, and

family commitments” (p. 1303), compared to employees who did not perceive this flexibility. Recently, in an intervention (Results Only Work Environment) Moen et al. (2011) discovered that individuals who were in the intervention group showed increased physical activity, potentially due to additional schedule control, while those in the control group did not.

Flex time is considered an important component of employee health (Butler, Grzywacz, Ettner & Lui, 2009). Butler et al. found that employees who were using the option of flexibility reported better physical health and reduced stress and strain. Flexibility also helps employees better manage their daily lives leading to a reduction in stress (Thomas & Ganster, 1995, Voydanoff, 2005). Similarly, research demonstrates that flexibility generally reduces cholesterol levels (Thomas & Ganster), somatic complaints (Thomas & Ganster), burnout (Grzywacz et al., 2008), and sickness absence (Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, & Neuman, 1999). One caveat is that these differences are not always found. Employees who work compressed workweeks have reported the potential for negative effects. Employees who work in shift system, especially during the night complained of lack of sleep. (Martens, Nijhuis, Van Boxtel, & Knottnerus, 1999).

Employees are sometimes more productive and creative when they are given the option of flex-time and this increases their demand for flex-time usage. It has also been suggested by Sucharitha (2012) that there is a growing demand for flex-time in the organizations in India. The reason she gives is that there is a growing concern for lack of infrastructure and health sanitation standards in place in many private organizations. There is also a higher chance of employees falling sick or getting injured. As a result, the literature (Sucharitha, 2012) suggests that, the main reason to give flex time to employees in India is to avoid any of these issues.

2.3.2 Disadvantages to Employees

Employee performance may be negatively affected by flex-time if the employee is impeded by those preceding him/her in the work flow because of their existing usage of flex time. Employees may be hesitant to use the option of flex time as they fear they might come across as less committed to their career and their job (Drew & Murtagh, 2005; Eaton, 2003) and not well suited for a position in management (Drew & Murtagh, 2005).

Kossek (1989) found that employees feel that their decision to opt for flex time is dependent on their economic position within the company structure and how their ethnic background is viewed by the employer. The lower their position is, the harder it tends to be for them to use the option of flex-time. This is why Kossek, (1989) states that employees, who are higher in the organizational hierarchy of a company, are going to have a favourable attitude towards the implementation of flex time. However, he also mentions that if an employee is to be a woman, or from a minority racial group, they were less favorable towards the implementation of flex time.

Employees have stated that utilizing the option of flex time would cause others to perceive them as less committed to their career and their job (Drew & Murtagh, 2005; Eaton, 2003) and not well suited for a position in management (Drew & Murtagh, 2005). In one study, 80% of the employees that did not have the option of flex time wanted more flexible options, but were concerned about whether it would create problems for them at work (Galinsky, Bond, & Hill, 2005). Managers are a key factor who influences employee decisions in terms of choosing to use or not use the option of flex time programs availability (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002; Parker & Allen, 2001; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Thompson et al., 1999; Warren & Johnson, 1995). Further,

the informal support provided by managers is suggested to have a greater influence on employee outcomes such as job satisfaction, work-family conflict, stress, and turnover intent (Behson, 2005; Breaugh & Frye, 2008).

2.3.3 Advantages to Management and Managers

The primary advantages for organizations to implement flex time is to remain competitive, to increase retention, assist in recruitment efforts, enhance employee engagement, drive business results, improve scheduling, and help employees manage their lifestyle (Galinsky, Bond, & Sakai, 2008; Hewitt, 2008). This is supported in Liddicoat (2003) which she found in her study of six New Zealand organizations. The primary reasons why the Human Resource department implemented flex time was to deal with the potential loss of key employees, meet employee's requested needs, and ensure they were doing "the right thing" (Liddicoat, 2003, p. 365).

One of the crucial advantages to management may be the reduction in absenteeism and tardiness. This is because with flex time employees can take care of personal business without using sick-leave time or other paid company time. This approach to scheduling hours of work may lead to a more productive and healthy environment, improved morale and increased loyalty to the company. Also, it may lead to formation of team spirit where individuals have to consult each other before making group decisions about starting and ending times. Sometimes manager's supervision and monitoring is viewed as a positive influence within the organization that may lead to increased levels of productivity (Harper and Sands, 2012).

Some argue that for an employee to be successful and productive in the work, they need to be given the flexibility in their work schedule and timings, through the use of flex

time (Mun and Yonekawa, 2006). As it is discussed by Lee, et al. (2012), it is also important to note that for a lot of companies the issue with implementing flex time for their employees has to be about how much more the company itself can get back.

2.3.4 Disadvantages to Management and Managers

One challenge for flex time is that certain organizations operate in more than one shift and it may lead to confusion between the employees. Also, additional costs to the organization may be incurred in implementing the plan. These costs might include time-recording equipment, increased buffer stocks, and costs of implementing the plan (e.g., consultants, project leaders, committees). From another perspective, managerial control may be viewed as questionable due to the implementation of flex time. For example, internal and external communications may deteriorate and cause confusion between different shifts.

One of the major drawbacks may be that employees may not be present in the organization when required. Some job functions may go uncovered. Problems may develop between employees who have a choice of flex time and other employees, who because of their job function, cannot use flex time. Finally, supervision may be more difficult and some supervisors may lose partial control over subordinates who arrive earlier or stay later than their supervisor (Mun and Yonekawa, 2006). In the 2008 National Study of Employers (Galinsky et al., 2008), organizations cited high costs and the potential loss of productivity as the top two hindrances in implementing the concept of flex time.

Some companies feel that the implementation of flex-time is actually not beneficial for their profit margins. The concepts of flex time and profitability are thought to be (Lee et al., 2012) intrinsically tied to one another. The authors suggest that by allowing the

workers to have more personal time, it is cutting away time from their productive fixed time schedule. Organizations may feel threatened by the implementation of flex time as it not only cuts away time from the regular scheduled working hours of the employees, but it could also result in the lack of productivity (Mun and Yonekawa, 2006).

Stevens & Elsworth (1979) found that the implementation of flexible working hours in the Australian public service sector resulted in the change of work hour shifts for the employees. The workers would come late for their morning shifts and leave early from their evening shifts. Due to this process the employees were actually shortening their time spent doing any work. The work shifts which were affected were the morning and evening shifts. According to Stevens & Elsworth (1979) these changes in working hours would provide greater free time for the employees in which they pursue greater leisure activities. However, the activities that they engage in during their leisure time, may affect their job productivity as well. Stevens & Elsworth (1979) claim this is one of the reasons why certain businesses are apprehensive about the implementation of flex-time in their work areas. Stevens & Elsworth (1979) do highlight the problems that might be associated with the implementation of flex time in the public sector. Their study only offers one suggestion as a solution - which businesses may look for alternative methods that provide their employees with more personal time.

2.4 Sustainability and Flex-time

The study by Golembiewski (1975) was the first ever research done in regards to flex-time and its implications on the employee and employer. The study suggested that one might be able to hypothesize that employees who stay in metropolitan areas would be

more likely to use the option of flex-time as it might reduce the need to commute during peak office hours. This reduction in the need of traveling during peak hours saves time for the employees and also provides them the opportunity for down time. However, there are certain criticisms of this particular study. First, the author only offers a narrow perspective as to why an employee might use the option of flex time, even if it is a single point of view. It is still not specific enough to state that these are the reasons that an employee primarily chooses the option of flex time. Productivity was measured only through indirect methods such as absenteeism and tardiness. No attempt was made to analyze the actual productivity levels and/or their changes. While indirect measures are not bad per se, it is fair to say that they do not paint a clear picture of what is actually happening to the productivity levels. This is vital since the employers need to know the effect of flex time on their organization before implementing the concept.

Some workers feel that there should be a balance between the economic, social and environmental spheres (Johnston et al., 2007). Johnston et al., (2007) state that economic sphere is viewed as the desire to be financially stable; the social sphere is viewed as the organization's relationship with the employees and its cultural interaction. The environmental sphere is viewed as the ability to maintain minimal ecological footprint. If there is no balance, then it becomes hard to remain productive in a company. Therefore, it is felt by some that flex time may help provide balance between these three spheres.

Tenuta, (2010) introduces the technical aspect of sustainability and how it can be measured in an organization. Their study allows readers to understand and compare sustainability reports by stakeholders. Stakeholders may then understand the importance that sustainability brings to an organization. The study came up with three

crucial parameters that helped measure sustainability; economic, social, and environmental parameters. These three parameters were also some of the main concepts that employees understand about sustainability and how they perceive its benefits.

2.5 Leisure and Flex time

Christensen and Staines (1990) argue that using flex time could provide employees the time and opportunity to engage in leisure time. The authors state that with stringent working schedules of the employees it is unlikely that they get the opportunity to engage in leisure time. But with flex time employees can customize their work schedules their needs and could get the opportunity to engage in leisure activities.

The study done by Hicks and Richards (1981), flex time was originally implemented in certain organizations to reduce car and motorcycle congestion around the parking facilities. However, implementing flex time in the organizations had other unexpected benefits also. The employees reported overall increase in leisure and work satisfaction. The authors suggest that this could be one of the reasons employees choose flex time as it can provide employees the opportunities to engage in leisure activities.

The above literature indeed suggests that leisure plays an important role when it comes to employee's decision to choose flex time. Avery and Zabel (2001) suggest that flex time is seen as a viable option by organizations to provide employees the leisure time they crave Avery and Zabel (2001) also go on to suggest that leisure time for employees is an important part in their job satisfaction. Lee and Devoe (2012) in various organizations across North America, it was found that employees who were utilizing flex time had more leisure time compared to those who were not. The authors also imply that employees who had more leisure time were also more satisfied with their job compared to those who didn't. According to the above literature it is evident that leisure

could be one of reasons which has an important role when it comes to employees opting for flex time. However, what is not certain is that if leisure is indeed one of the specific reasons as to why employees choose flex time.

2.6 Lifestyle and Flex time

Certain employees at universities can enjoy greater flex time and holidays because of their lifestyle choices. Lifestyle differs somewhat from leisure in that lifestyle involves three components: work, leisure, and non-work activities. But some professors at a University in Australia feel discouraged to use the option of flex time because they are overburdened with work and hence have very little time to spend on their personal lives (Sharafizad et al., 2001). As the literature indicates, if they are to take time off, they may not be in a position to continue with their research or keep up with the roles of being a professor to their students. Some of these professors feel that they are in charge of making sure their students are learning as well as researching. However, one can imply that this is only possible if they are always at work and not taking any personal time off. The literature suggests, that it could be said that some of the employees who are professors find it hard to use flex time because of the lifestyle choice they have made, due to their profession. There could be a division between the ones that can exercise the option of flex time, and those that cannot. The division between the two sets of employees can create tension within the work environment. According to Sharafizad et al (2001) the professors at some universities believe there could be a disparity between them and the regular workers who are employed at the university and they also feel as if the university should disband the concept of flex time. However, Sharafizad, Paull & Omari (2011), also state that the university is unable to do away

with having flex time as this is how they are able to attract general employees willing to work at the university.

While there is a need to ensure that there is time for an employee to enjoy their personal lifestyle, it is also the duty of the employer to ensure that there are provisions in place to allow for that to happen. If the employer allows employees to exercise flex time as an option, then the employee is more capable of maintaining a work-life balance. Business plans may be designed keeping in mind that employees need to have a balance between their work and family life (Spinks, 2004).

Many workers wish to use the option of flex time to ensure that they can attain a balance between their work and personal lives. In this way, workers like to use flex time as an option for their own personal lifestyle choices since it would help them ensure that they can continue to perform at an optimum level to attain high achievement in their workforce. This has been supported by Kristen & Tammy (2010) who has highlighted that there are three need-based motivational factors - need for affiliation at work, need for segmentation of work from other life roles, and need for occupational achievement. Additionally, the moderating roles of an organizational variable and lifestyle variable were also tested. In this study it was found that all three types of motivational factors were the reason why employees would like to have the option of flex time. The need for organizational variable seems to be more important as opposed to family variable. Employees were more likely to not exercise the use of flex time if they felt that their occupation would be at stake, or they would have lesser affiliation with the business organization that they are working with. Hence, this led to employees using their lifestyle choices to be the main influential factor in using flex time as an option. However, many employees believe that they may only be able to exercise flex-time

choice that can help them to choose the option of flex time or not. The authors also mention specific plans that organizations make to ensure that employees can have the option of using flex-time due to their lifestyle choices. There is an evident gap in the literature regarding the different kinds of lifestyle choices, as well as how productive an employee may be if he/she is exercising the use of flex-time. The literature also presents us with another limitation that it does not highlight if there are any other reasons as to why employees would choose flex-time.

2.7 Technology and Flex time

Technology also plays a big role in influencing an employee's decisions to use the option of flex- time, or not. Many employees wish to use flex-time as it would allow them to have more access to leisure time, and this is because they are more dependent on technology to be more productive in the work area. There is a method by which employees can merge both personal and professional time (Takiya, Archbold, Berge, 2005).

Telecommuting (i.e. flex-time) is also linked with an increase in productivity (Apgar, 1998, McCloskey & Igbaria, 2003; Pinsonneault & Boisvert, 2001) and employee retention (Pinsonneault & Boisvert, 2001). Gajendran and Harrison (2007) state that these benefits are most likely experienced by employees who spend a majority of their time (i.e. more than 2.5 days) telecommuting. Spending a lot of time outside of the office also has its consequences; this same study found that co-worker relationships were harmed because of increased time spent working remotely. Other negative outcomes associated with telecommuting are decreased perceptions of autonomy (Gurstein, 2001) and increased feelings of work-family conflict (Gajendran & Harrison,

2007; Golden, Veiga, & Simsek, 2006). Hence it is fair to say technology now is an integral part of flex-time (Rau, 2004).

2.8 Marital Status and Gender

The issue of not having the option of flex-time can also cause tensions within the personal life of an employee. Especially in the case of women, not having control over their working times, can cause conflicts at home as they have to deal with more pressures at home because of their lifestyle choice of working for longer hours, in the absence of flex-time. As Ramadoss (2013) points out in her review of work culture in India, there is an increase in work-family conflicts that are arising in India, especially towards women in the call centers. Because of this conflict, employers now have to pay greater attention to worker benefits, and need to find solutions to reduce the lifestyle conflict. As one can see through this literature, the conflicts that were arising dealt with the lack of flex-time availability in the working place, especially since most of the workers were single women. Therefore, the author mentions that it was a requirement by the call center companies to ensure that they had the option of flex-time available for their female workers, as they were able to now reduce the conflict between the work-family areas.

Pierce et al., (1980) emphasize that, being a woman, non-white, or with limited education means that there are fewer flex-time opportunities. It implies that if a organizational has a woman, or a non-white, or an employee who is less educated than they are, then they would be less likely to receive the benefits of flex-time because the business places less value on them than the other employees who are male, white and very well educated (Pierce et al., 1980).The study also stated that if a worker is married with a steady income and occupation, a college student or is self-employed, then the

chances of them having flex-time increases. This might be because they are more in control of their own times. They also work more than 50 hours per week and therefore they have the option of utilizing flex-time. But, if an employee works on a fixed schedule of 40 hours a week, they are less likely to have the option of utilizing flex-time. This difference in option also highlights that employee's may or may not be utilizing flex-time options because of gender and race issues as opposed to leisure, sustainability or lifestyle choices (Kossek et al., 2009).

It is fair to say that using flex-time at least once per week is more likely among workers who are white, female, parents of school-age children, married, or had obtained higher education (Golden, 2008). Access to flex-time, however, is less likely for females and non-whites (Golden, 2008; McCrate, 2005). Specifically, twenty-eight (28.1%) percent of men have access to flex-time compared to 26.7% of women; close to 31% of whites have access compared to about 21% of African-American or Hispanic employees (McMenamin, 2007). This lack of access among these demographic groups is considered a result of working in organizations that are less likely to offer flex-time (Kelly & Kalev, 2006); however, Golden (2008) found that females had less access to flex-time regardless of the type of job and industry factors. This is a point of interest when considering that flex-time is often viewed as a "woman's issue" (Atkinson & Hall, 2009).

Men are more likely to cite a need for help with their long commute or amount of work, while women list the need to balance work and family concerns (Drew & Murtagh, 2005). However, men may be less willing to list family as the reason behind their desire for flex-time. Hall (1990) has called this the "invisible daddy track" - when men do not disclose family reasons for taking time off work to avoid the perception of being

uncommitted to their careers. Other research has also suggested that men are less likely than women to acknowledge family-responsibility reasons for requesting flex-time (Ferber & O'Farrell, 1991). They often use paid-time-off or vacation days to care for a sick child or after a child's birth so that others do not know they are engaged in family-related roles (Berry & Rao, 1997; Pleck, 1993).

2.9 Flex-time and India

In the 21st century, the rapidly evolving Indian economy is facing a unique conundrum. With employment opportunities galore and an open war on talent, employers are trying to find innovative ways to win over the 60% of the population which is under 25 years of age (Desai et al., 2011). In order to combat this challenge, Indian organizations have now started implementing flex-time as a tool to recruit new employees for their organization. Shekhar (2013) states that Indian companies in the past used to provide specific employee benefits such as health coverage leave benefits and statutory retirement programmes. These benefits were generally provided by the old economy sectors dominated by manufacturing firms, engineering firms and government owned enterprises. These benefits were aimed at a generation of employees who believed and adhered to the concept of lifelong employment. However, as the economy has grown in recent years, people have become more mobile and new employment avenues have opened up, creating favorable conditions for flex-time.

Human resource managers have identified flex-time as a key tool to recruit employees, since it was the most innovative way of offering employee benefits. Shekhar (2013) also goes on to suggest that flex-time now is the most appreciated benefit among the Indian employees, but at the same time the author also suggests flex-time remains the most under-used concept in organizations till now. The author this is a recent

development and primarily provided by large employers specializing in information technology or information technology enabled industries (IT-ITES).

Regus (2011) states that; almost 80% of companies in India now offer flexible working options to their employees – either in terms of hours or location. Many Indian organizations are recognizing that flexible working is not only important for older workers but is becoming a part of the value proposition that they offer to their younger employees as well. It helps an organization in remaining lean and cost effective which can be a significant source of competitive advantage. Regus (2011) states that now over 75% of respondents in India feel that going flexible allows for higher revenue generation and productivity. The author also suggests that 70% of Indian businesses are appreciative of flex time benefits. However, at the same time the author only 59% of Indian firms believe that flex time working provides lower costs than fixed time office working, and only 57% of Indian firms would allow their senior staff to benefit from flex time. Both of the reports are similar in nature as they provide an insight on how flex time was introduced in India. However, one can argue that both of the authors do not focus on the role of employees in flex time being introduced in India.

The recent boom in the Indian information technology sector has also had an adverse effect on employees, leading to stress and a lack of job satisfaction. Bharat (2008) states that now a larger part of the IT sector is moving from a standard eight-hour day to operating twenty four hours a day for seven days of the week. Moreover, there is a changing pattern in the working hours which is quite different from the standard one, which normally operates from 9 am to 5 pm (Bharat, 2008). While some employees work in the standard time, some others need to be available for work that normally starts

early in the evening and continues well through the night. Sometimes they need to even work beyond the normal eight hours (Rai, 2012).

Increasing workloads have pressured employees to demonstrate their commitment to work in more obvious ways (Ishaya and Ayman, 2008). Consequently, a larger part of them have tended to be present at their workplace for longer periods of time, thereby reducing the time for which they are available at home. The internet and mobile phones have made it possible for the organizations to keep in constant touch with the employees both during the day and at night (Morgan & Zeffane, 2003). This has further intensified the work demands on employees. Consequently, this has led to growing reports of stress and work imbalance (Bhagwagar, 2009).

Simultaneously, family life is also becoming more complex. The extended family, even in India, is slowly disappearing (Patel, 2005). Small nuclear families have become more popular, where both the spouses go to work. In addition, there are an increasing number of single parent households due to the increase in divorces (Amato et al. 2003). Although this problem is not as serious in India as in the West, yet it could become a serious issue in the future. Participation by women in employment has continued to grow over the past decade. In spite of more women going out to work, there has been little change in patterns of household responsibilities (Singh 2004). Women continue to undertake the majority share of domestic chores and child rearing.

Tewathia (2014) states that the precise reason of introduction and implementation of flex-time recently in India is to help the employees cope with increasing job pressures, and to provide job satisfaction to the employees. Apart from IT firms, various other organizations have started implementing flex time in India, including:

- 1) The Hindustan Times-(One of the leading English newspapers in India)

- 2) India Today Group-(One of the largest media house in India)
- 3) NDTV India-(Leading News channel of the country)

2.10 Summary

Flex time is an evolving concept that is both old and new in nature. It is old in the sense that it has been in existence for nearly thirty years now starting from mid 1970's, and it's new because of its constant evolution in terms of its definition and its application in organizations. Due to changing wants and needs of the modern day employee, the application of flex time seems inevitable. Flex time is one innovation of flexibility that uses the work schedule to address issues of individual needs and organizational effectiveness (Olmsted and Smith, 1989).

However, there is still a lack of clarity when it comes to understanding the specific reasons as to why employees do or don't use the option of flex time. Similarly, the results are not nearly as conclusive for employers (Golembiewski, Hilles & Kango, 1974; Golembiewski & Hilles, 1977; Harvey & Luthans, 1979; Mueller & Cole, 1977; Osteem, 1979; Salvatore, 1974; Swart, 1978, p. 255; Thornton, 1973; Walker, Fletcher, & McLeod, 1975). In general, the effects of flex time upon the organization are still, to a substantial degree, uncertain and possibly vary in terms of specific industries. Hence, it is instructive to examine the use of flex time within the publishing industry as outlined in this study.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

The objective of the study is to investigate the specific reasons for employees to choose or not choose the option of flex-time in the workplace, and to explore how this decision may be influenced by: leisure, lifestyle and sustainability. The study is exploratory in nature and it required in-depth data for identifying themes and interpreting results. Therefore qualitative data was collected by using semi-structured interviews.

3.1 Data Collection

This study was guided by theory and methods developed for undertaking studies based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), as outlined above in the literature review. TPB suggests using qualitative methods to identify the beliefs that could influence attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. TPB hypothesizes that these three factors shape behavioral intentions regarding how people decide to participate in a given behavior such as participating in flex time. This qualitative approach to data collection is referred to as the solicitation phase of the application of TPB.

TPB suggests using a second phase to this kind of research, whereby the beliefs identified in the solicitation phase are used to design a quantitative based survey questionnaire. The advantage of the survey questionnaire is that it is possible to measure the relative importance of each component of TPB: beliefs, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. However, this study focussed on the solicitation phase using the qualitative approaches described below.

Baumbusch (2010, p. 255), “Interviews are an important data collection strategy, as they can facilitate rich description and detailed accounts of the participants’ experiences and perspectives on a phenomenon”. The present study required employee’s perspective on why they chose flex-time, what are flex-time’s advantages and disadvantages. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as they are an effective, in-depth data collection instrument that fully explores subjects, stories, perceptions and concerns (Gay et al., 2009). The question for the respondents was designed to get qualitative data, using open ended questioning (see Unstructured Interview Form provided in Appendix A).

DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, have highlighted that face to face interviews provide in-depth personal information to be shared, and it also gives us qualitative, rather than quantitative, information to be gathered. They are less formal and therefore employees feel comfortable relaying their opinions. This kind of interview also leads to greater communication between the interviewer and the interviewee; the person conducting the interview can relay more information so that the interviewee can understand the questions better. The interviewer can also gauge body language and tone of the responses of the person getting interviewed (Fazio & Olson, 2003). This seems to be the best method to get a detailed answer as to why employees do or do not opt for flex-time, and what further actions are going to be taken based off of this divide.

However, sometimes the interviewer is unable to properly articulate their questions in a coherent manner and thereby leading the interviewee to give answers that stray away from the topic. Another weakness is that it is hard to properly set up interview times, based on the availability of the interviewee. Because this was a semi-structured form of

an interview there were times that the open-ended questions led to jumping from one subject to the next, making it difficult to interpret responses.

A big drawback of this kind of interview therefore is the possibility of interviewer bias (Baumbusch, 2010). For example, the interviewer may ask leading questions to get the desired answers.

For an interviewer to deal with such drawbacks, it is important that the interviewer creates an environment where there are good listening skills, and where the participants feel that there is a focused end with the semi structured questions (Baumbusch, 2010). It is also important that the interviews are conducted in a fixed and coordinated manner, and are scheduled and planned in advance (Whiting, 2008).

3.1 Selection of Respondents

Participants that were included in the study were the employees who work in the organization – The Hindustan Times. The organization currently has approximately 700 employees. However for the purpose of this study only the employees working for HT CITY which is a daily entertainment and lifestyle supplement of The Hindustan Times, were interviewed. This particular group was chosen because the researcher was a previous employee of this group and the contact is also the head of this department. The familiarity of the work-place environment was an advantage as the respondents felt a sense of security while being interviewed. However, there was also a risk of loss of privacy and reputation.

This section has 30 employees. From these 30 employees, 18 employees were using the option of flex-time and 12 employees were not. For the purpose of this study a total of

8 employees were chosen for the interview. The number of participants was limited to only 8 due to a time constraint for the research.

The participants were divided into two groups

- 1) Four Employees who use the option of flex-time
- 2) Four Employees who don't use the option of flex-time

The first step was to approach the contact – Sonal Kalra, author and editor of HT City, the daily entertainment and lifestyle supplement of Hindustan Times, in order to develop a verbal agreement to conduct the research. The contact had full authority to provide me access to employee contact information. The contact provided the list of employees who were using flex-time and those employees who are not using flex-time via e-mail.

This e-mail contract contained the telephone numbers and e-mail address of the potential participants. Then a recruitment e-mail was sent to both sets of the employees informing them about the purpose of the research. The first four employees, who responded in the stipulated time and agreed to participate for each set, were selected. One of the possible biases this approach could create was that there could be a lack of confidentiality within the employees themselves. The decision to participate or not to participate in the study could be influenced by informal communications between the employees.

Next, participants were called to fix the date, time and location for the interview. The interviews for the study were conducted in two kinds of places: at the offices of The Hindustan Times, and various off-site locations, depending on the employees' convenience. Interviews which were held on-site were conducted in private rooms ensuring that participants would not be seen during the interview by fellow employees,

hence ensuring their confidentiality. Off-site locations such as coffee houses located away from the premises, were chosen by some respondents. The purpose for choosing a coffee house was that participants were in a more secure and relaxed environment and also it helped in keeping their identity confidential.

All data was collected, stored, and analyzed in conformity with the ethical protocols established at Vancouver Island University (see Appendix B). The data was stored in a password protected personal computer to which only the researcher would have access. And back-up would be kept in a password protected hard disk. Complete confidentiality was ensured, as explained above. Interview notes and transcripts were created in MS word and excel format. Data will be kept for a period of one year. Upon completion of the research, and presentation and publication of the research findings, the data will be destroyed. All electronic data including audio files will be permanently deleted and interview notes will be shredded.

3.2 Data Analysis

The intent of the questionnaire design was to fulfill the objective of getting specific answers as to why employees do or do not choose flex-time. The interviews generated data about the following relationships:

- 1) Between flex-time and sustainability
- 2) Between flex-time and leisure
- 3) Between flex-time and lifestyle

Thematic Analysis, used in the analysis of this data, is a type of qualitative analysis used in to analyse classifications and present themes (patterns) that relate to the data. It reveals the opinions of participant regarding flex-time in great detail and helped

illustrate the method to deal with diverse issues of employees of Hindustan Times via interpretations (Boyatzis, 1998).

Thematic analysis provided a systematic element to data analysis. It allowed the researcher to associate an analysis of the frequency of a theme with one of the whole content, such as establishing relationships between flex-time and various components as sustainability and leisure. Good qualitative research needs to be able to draw interpretations and be consistent with the data that is collected. With this in mind, thematic analysis was used to detect and identify factors or variables that influence choices made by the participants regarding flex-time in this organisation. Therefore, the participants' interpretations were significant in terms of giving the most appropriate explanations for their reasons to choose or not to choose flex-time (Hatch 2002; Creswell 2003).

The respondents were organized into categories of flex-time and non-flex-time users and contingency tables were prepared to group the data, as provided in the Results Chapter. Subsequently, thematic analysis was carried out to provide the opportunity to code and categorise data into themes. For example, how leisure is an important aspect of utilizing flex-time. In the case of thematic analysis, processed data could be displayed and classified its similarities and differences (Miles and Huberman 1994). An example of this is the development of themes that describe advantages and disadvantages of flex-time.

Finally, the thematic analysis process allowed to analyze the data without engaging in pre-existing themes, which meant that it could be adapted to research that, relies only on upon employee" clarifications. In other words, each statement or idea which contributes towards understanding the issues or which lead to an appreciation of the

whole picture. This is because every statement was valid in understanding a single concept or ones shared with other statements. Concepts were constructed to give a full picture of the employee's views and actions. (Joffe & Yardley 2004; Blacker 2009).

This allowed the researcher to present the results within systematic framework by illustrating the identified themes. This brought out specific reasons as to why employees may or may not use flex-time in organisations like The Hindustan Times.

3.3 Ethical Issues

Association with The Hindustan Times as a previous employee posed ethical issues while conducting this research. There was a possibility of social risk involved in this study that is loss of privacy status or reputation. Due to the researcher's previous involvement in the organization there was also a risk of employees feeling insecure while being interviewed. To minimize this risk and for transparency purposes it had to disclosed to the participants that the researcher was a former employee in their organization. Participation of the employees was completely voluntary in this study. Prior to the interviews they had to sign a consent form. The identity of the participants was also kept confidential. The names of the participants were known initially by the researcher but were to be removed and replaced in the final paper with code numbers and pseudonyms to protect their identity.

CHAPTER 4

Results

The study seeks to test the viability of the concept of flex-time and possible relationships with leisure, sustainability, and lifestyle. The research was conducted in India using a study of employees at The Hindustan Times (English Daily). This organization was chosen as it is one of the few in India that offers flex-time to its employees.

4.1 Demographic Summary of Respondents

In The Hindustan Times HT City section of the Delhi office, the total number of employees working was 30. Out of 30 employees, 18 employees were utilizing the option of flex-time while 12 employees preferred not to use the option. The typical age of the total eight respondents selected for the interviews were between 25-30 years of age. Out of the total respondents, 4 were males and 4 were females.

4.2 Flex-time Policy

The operating days and hours of HT CITY at Hindustan Times are Monday to Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. All employees are expected to be at work during these hours unless the employees have applied for the option of flex-time and their request for flex-time is approved.

Flex-time at HT CITY is an option where employees get the freedom to plan their work schedule according to their needs. For example, the minimum number of working hours for employees in a day is 8 hours, and for a week the minimum number of working hours is 40 hours. Through flex-time employees have the freedom to plan how they

wish to complete these 40 hours in a week. Supervisors approve flex-time on a case-by-case basis. Full-time employees who have completed at least six months of employment are eligible for flex-time. The employee must first discuss possible flex-time arrangements with his/her supervisor and then submit a written request using the Flex-time Request Form. The supervisor will approve or deny the flex-time request based on staffing needs, the employee's job duties, the employee's work record and the employee's ability to temporarily or permanently return to a standard work schedule when needed. A flex-time arrangement may be suspended or cancelled at any time. Exempt employees must depart from any flex-time schedule to perform their jobs. Non-exempt employees may be asked to work overtime regardless of a flex-time schedule.

Table 1. Clarity of Flex-time Policy

	CLEAR FLEX-TIME POLICY	UN-CLEAR FLEX-TIME POLICY	Theme
Flex time users	4	0	Flex-time policy is well defined
Non-flex-time users	4	0	

The results clearly suggest that Hindustan Times has a well-defined flex-time policy for their employees. The organization has also made sure that all employees are aware of these policies regardless of whether the employees use it or not. The organization conducts an orientation programme for the employees to brief them about flex-time policies.

4.2.1 Employees Using Flex-time

All the four respondents who were utilizing the option of flex-time were satisfied. One person said, “They had a good experience regarding flex-time so far and that they were satisfied”. Further, they clearly understood what the flex-time policies were in the organization. They knew the rules and regulations regarding flex-time policy and were content with it.

As one of the respondent aptly stated, “so far flex-time has been good. I know what the policies of this organization are and I respect them. The rules and regulations regarding flex-time are in favour of the employees and therefore I am quite satisfied with my job.”

Another respondent seemed satisfied with the flex-time, however felt that even if flex-time is available to use, employee will not use the option of flex-time if they are not aware of the flex-time policies of the organization. Also the policies should be in favour of the employees. The respondent felt they were fortunate that The Hindustan Times had a favourable and a clear flex-time policy without any ambiguity.

4.2.2 Employees Not Using Flex-time

All the participants not using flex-time were aware of about the rules and regulations regarding flex-time and clearly understood the policies of the organization regarding flex-time. They also felt that their colleagues who use it are also quite satisfied.

4.3 Implementing Flex-time in Organizations

The respondents were asked about their perspective on implementation of the flex-time by the organization. It is noteworthy that all eight respondents – the four using flex-time and the four not using the option of flex-time stated that flex-time is a tool used by the organization to recruit employees. The participants also stated that flex-time

provides job satisfaction, and therefore it helps to keep employees loyal to the organization. The four respondents who were not using flex-time stated that, “With the increasing competition, it’s not easy to attract top talent. Flex-time helps in recruiting new employees and also keeps the working population loyal and committed to the company”.

Table 2. Flex-Time as a Recruitment Tool

	Flex-time : A tool for recruiting employees	Theme
Flex time users	4	Flex-time is a recruitment tool
Non-flex-time users	4	Job satisfaction Loyalty to the company

The results from both sets of participants provide evidence that employers implement the concept of flex-time to recruit new employees and maintain employee loyalty.

Previous studies have indicated that the perception of managers plays a key role in employees choosing flex-time. Therefore the employees who had chosen flex-time in this organization were specifically asked if managerial perceptions affected their decision to use flex-time. All four of the participants who were interviewed said that how they were perceived by their superiors and the hierarchy did not affect their decision to use flex-time. In fact, they felt that management encouraged their choice of using flex-time. There is a positive inter-personal relationship between the employees and the managers. Hence the employees find it easy to use flex-time.

4.4 Flex-time and Leisure

The employees were asked what the definition of leisure was according to them. Most employees defined leisure as “use of free time which could be used for engaging in

activities which provide employees enjoyment. These activities could vary from reading a book, running in the park to watching TV at home with family”.

Quote “A”

“For me leisure is the opportunity afforded through free time to relax oneself. How you choose to relax is up to you. I use my leisure time to watch movies”.

Flex-time users were asked whether utilizing flex-time led to an increase in leisure time or not. All the four participants clearly stated that using flex-time led to an increase in leisure time.

The respondents felt that using flex-time increased their leisure time as they had more time to engage in activities that they like. Employees said that they like to read, go to the gym and sometimes spend time with their friends, and that using flex-time enabled this.

The participants who did not use flex-time were asked that whether they were able to engage in leisure activities or not. Of the four participants that were interviewed; all of them said that they were able to engage in leisure regardless of the fact that they did not use flex-time. The respondents were in agreement that it’s not a necessity to use flex-time to get leisure time. As they stated that they were able to get leisure time without using flex-time.

Table 3. Flex-time and Leisure

	Yes	No	Theme
Flex time users	4	0	There is a difference of opinion – flex-time users say that flex-time results in increased leisure time, but non users of flex-time disagree
Non-flex-time users	0	4	

Results suggest that both sets of the employees were able to engage in leisure activities regardless of the fact they used flex-time or not. The results also suggest that employees who were utilizing flex-time felt they had an increase in leisure time compared to those employees who were not utilizing flex-time. However, the findings indicate that it is not necessary to use flex-time in order to get increased leisure time.

4.5 Flex-time and Lifestyle Choice

The employees of HT CITY defined work-life balance as the ability to properly prioritize a balance between work (career/ambition) and lifestyle (Health, pleasure, family etc.).

Quote “A”

“Work-life balance is letting neither your career nor your personal life define you”

Quote “B”

“To feel like I have the freedom to design my own life, at work and home”

Flex-time users said that by utilizing flex-time they were able to maintain work-life balance. It provided participants time to spend with their families. All of the respondents had a similar answer to each other. One of the respondents felt that, “All employees need time to spend with their families and flex-time provides that. At times you need time for yourself and that I mean not leisure time but just time for yourself. It

is very important for an employee to maintain work-life balance as it makes the employee more productive and satisfied”.

Employees who did not use flex-time were also questioned if they were able to maintain work-life balance regardless of using flex-time. All four of the participants stated that, they were indeed able to maintain work-life balance without using flex-time. All of the respondents stated that they were able to get time to spend with their loved ones and family. They felt that they did not need flex-time to maintain work-life balance. They also felt that if the employees can carefully manage time then they can achieve work-life balance without flex-time.

Table 4. Flex-time and work-life balance

	Ye s	N o	Theme
Flex time users	4	0	Flex-time leads to work-life balance
Non-flex-time users	0	4	Flex-time is not a necessity to get work-life balance

Results suggest that both sets of the employees were able to maintain work-life balance regardless of using flex-time or not. Flex-time does provide work-life balance. However, again it's not necessary for employees to use flex-time in order to maintain work-life balance, as the results suggest.

4.6 Flex-time and Sustainability

The employees of HT CITY were asked to define sustainability their personal definition. The majority of employees, sustainability was defined as the “conservation and optimum use of both organization and the employee’s resources and time”.

Quote “A”

“I would define sustainability as the ability to achieve balance between economical needs and the ecological needs of an organization”.

Quote “B”

“Sustainability is a strategy that drives corporate growth by inclusion of ecological factors in the growth”.

In order to explore and understand the relationship between flex-time and sustainability, employees who were using flex-time were asked if flex-time was sustainable or not?

Two of the participants using agreed that flex-time was sustainable. However, at the same time two of the participants using flex-time said that flex-time was unsustainable.

Two of the respondents were in agreement with each other, in regards to flex-time being sustainable. One of the respondents clearly said that “Most of the employees think that the major benefit of using flex-time is that it provides leisure time or increases productivity. But I think the most important benefit of flex-time is that it provides sustainability to employees and the organization”.

While the other two respondents using flex-time did not agree that flex-time is sustainable, they felt that each job is of a different nature and in order for flex-time to be sustainable; it has to be designed as per the nature of the job.

The participants who were not utilizing flex-time were questioned whether they were able to be sustainable without using flex-time. Out of the four selected, two of the participants stated that they were not able to be sustainable. While the other two participants said that they were able to be sustainable while working without using flex-time.

Two of the respondents not using flex-time stated that they were unsustainable without using flex-time. They also felt that, the use of office resources goes up along with the transportation bill. One of the respondents clearly stated that flex-time should be made mandatory so that organizations can become ecologically sustainable. While the other two respondents felt that being sustainable is not dependent on using flex-time. However it does depend on the nature of the job and the willingness of the employee to be sustainable.

Table 5. Flex-time and Sustainability

	Yes	No	Theme
Flex time users	2	2	Flex-time needs to be designed and implemented according to the nature of the job
Non-flex-time users	2	2	

The answers from both sets of participants indicate that there is a lack of clarity when it comes to employees opinions regarding flex-time and sustainability. The findings also suggest that the participants it's not a necessity to use flex-time in order to be sustainable. However, the major recurring theme from the answers is that in order for flex-time to be considered sustainable by the organization, it needs to be designed and implemented as per the nature of the job.

4.7 Flex-time and Productivity

The employees of HT CITY defined productivity as the “ability to be efficient at the work-place within a certain time period”.

Quote “A”

“Productivity is being able to create top projects in a limited amount of time”.

Quote “B”

“Productivity is the effective use of innovation and resources to increase the value-added content of products and services”.

The literature review established that in many work places, flex-time is productive for the majority of the employees. However in this case only the employees who were not using flex-time were asked that if they were able to be productive without using flex-time. All four participants who were selected clearly said that, they were able to be productive without using flex-time. One of the respondents aptly stated that “To be productive at work, employees need to focus and they need to have will power to be productive. Therefore it’s not a necessity to use flex-time to be productive. If you want to be productive you will be, regardless of the fact you use flex-time or not”. The results clearly indicate that for employees in Hindustan Times to be productive it is not a necessity to use flex-time. The purpose of flex-time is providing employee benefits and for employers, flex-time is a tool used to keep the employee productive, loyal and motivated. Therefore these findings raise questions regarding flex-time and its optimum use and implementation in the organization.

4.8 Reasons for Choosing or Not Choosing Flex-time

The respondents who were using the option of flex-time were asked about the reasons for choosing the option of flex-time in the company. Two of them it gave them leisure time and the ability to maintain work-life balance, and gave them time to spend with family and friends. These findings suggest that “lifestyle” is an important reason. For these two, using flex-time also enabled them more leisure time. The other two participants had completely different reasons for choosing flex-time. One of the

participants stated that the main advantage of choosing flex-time was that it gave the participant the opportunity to be sustainable, while the other participant said that using flex-time increased productivity levels.

Quote “A”

“Using flex-time has provided me leisure time. I can indulge in activities such as going to the park for a walk, reading at home. Leisure time is essential for employees maintaining a balanced lifestyle”.

However, one of the respondents succinctly stated that the purpose of using flex-time was to be sustainable. “My nature of the job is such that I tend to spend most of my time outside the office. By using flex-time I only come to the office when required. Therefore I am able to conserve my resources as well as a company’s resources. Flex-time allows me to reduce fuel and transportation cost”.

The last respondent stated the flex-time provides the employees freedom to plan their own schedule. This leads to an increase in productivity.

Quote “B”

“If we plan our own schedule then we get the opportunity to work at our own pace. This freedom enables us to be more productive at work”.

The employee’s not using flex-time had their own reasons for not using this option.

Two of the participants said that their reason for not utilizing flex-time was that it made them unproductive at work. The third participant said using flex-time is unsustainable because it actually results in employees wasting resources. While one participant, flex-time is not used because of the fear of coming across as less committed to their superior. Two of the respondents felt that flex-time made them unproductive. They stated it’s easier for the employees to follow a fixed schedule as it is simpler for them. Employees

like to come in the morning for work and go back in the evening. The respondents feel that flex-time leads to tardiness. For example, employees come late in the office, while some of them take an extended break which leads to unproductively and leads to a lack of focus by the employees while working.

Quote “A”

“I like to follow a fixed schedule. Using flex-time is an unnecessary complication”.

For one of the respondents using flex-time was considered unsustainable. The respondent stated that “Since I work in shifts, so if I use flex-time then it means I would have to come to the office and then go back and come again, so it does not make sense for me as I stay quite far from the office. For me using flex-time means my transportation cost goes up, therefore it’s unsustainable”.

For the last respondent, managerial perception was a hindrance in utilizing flex-time. The respondent stated that “I would like to use flex-time but I don’t because of the fear, how my superiors would perceive me. And I certainly don’t want to come across as less committed to my superiors.”

Table 6. Reasons as to Why Employees do or Don't Use Flex-Time

	Leisure	Sustainability	Productivity	Lifestyle Choices	Perception of Managers	Theme
Flex time users	1	1	1	1	1	Advantages are leisure, work balance and sustainability
Non-flex-time users	0	1	2	0	1	Disadvantages are sustainability, productivity and perception of managers

The results suggest that the majority of the reasons for employees who chose flex-time are leisure, productivity and sustainability. But at the same time if we look at the reasons why employees did not choose flex-time, then productivity and sustainability are also the reasons why employee did not choose flex-time. This result suggests a lack of agreement on possible benefits and disadvantages. Possibly the individual circumstances determine the utility of flex-time

4.9 If Employees Were to Choose from Leisure, Sustainability or Lifestyle

Since the purpose of this study was to find out specific reasons as to why employees choose flex-time, participants were asked about their primary reasons for utilizing flex-time. Out of the four participants, two of them said that their primary reason for choosing flex-time was the work-life balance flex-time provides. While one of the participants stated that leisure was the motivation for using flex-time. The last participant to be interviewed stated that sustainability was the main reason for choosing

flex-time, as it leads to conservation of the employee's resources along with the companies as well.

According to one of the respondents, the primary aim for using flex-time would be to avail the benefits of leisure which comes with it. Employees like to spend time engaging in leisure activities and flex-time provides that.

For the last respondent, the main motivation for using flex-time was sustainability. The respondent said that, "It gives me the opportunity to be sustainable while working therefore my specific reason for choosing flex-time is sustainability".

In order to get more depth and insight, to what are the specific reasons of employees for opting for flex-time, those who did not use flex-time were also asked what could be their primary reason to use flex-time, if they decided to use flex-time in the near future. Two of the participants stated their primary reasons for using flex-time would be leisure. One of the respondents clearly said that "If there was one reason to use flex-time then it would definitely be for leisure purposes". While one of the respondents cited that "My primary reason to choose flex-time would be work-life balance it provides".

One of the participants said their sole motivation for using flex-time would be the work-life balance provides. This respondent stated that "My primary reason to choose flex-time would be work-life balance it provides".

The last participant said that the only reason for using flex-time would be the freedom to be sustainable. This person said: "If I were to choose flex-time for one reason then it would definitely be sustainability".

Table 7. Main reason for choosing or not choosing flex-time

	Leisure	Sustainability	Lifestyle	Theme
Flex time users	1	1	2	Results suggest that, the primary reasons for employees to choose flex-time is indeed sustainability, leisure and lifestyle choices
Non-flex-time users	2	1	1	

Results clearly suggest that for the majority of the employees in Hindustan Times, sustainability, leisure and lifestyle are the major reasons which motivate the employees to choose flex-time.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

5.1 Summary of Main Findings and Discussion

There has been limited research regarding the concept of flex-time, particularly in context of why employees do or don't choose flex-time. The present study was able to provide some clarity and insight concerning flex-time use by employees in the organisation The Hindustan Times.

Three possible explanations for choosing flex-time were explored in this study a) leisure b) sustainability and c) lifestyle (work-life balance). These explanations were derived from the findings of the study. The findings provided insights into the specific reasons why the employees of Hindustan Times were using flex-time were indeed one of leisure, sustainability and lifestyle. Both sets of respondents who were using flex-time and not using flex-time were asked that if they were to choose flex-time then what would be the specific reason for choosing it. The answers of the respondents indicated that leisure, sustainability and lifestyle were indeed the specific reasons as to why employees may opt for flex-time in The Hindustan Times.

The major advantage of using flex-time according to employees who use flex-time is that, it provides a certain degree of personal freedom to employees and it also leads to an increase in productivity. According to one of the participants of the study, "I use flex-time because it gives me freedom to plan my schedule and my day; this freedom enables me to work at my own pace, this allows me to be more productive at work".

Sustainability was also identified as an advantage for employees using flex-time in The Hindustan Times as one of the respondents aptly stated, “. “My nature of the job is such that I tend to spend most of my time outside the office. By using flex-time I only come to the office when required. Therefore I am able to conserve my resources as well as a company’s resources. Flex-time allows me to reduce fuel and transportation cost”.

The literature review also highlights that flex-time provides personal freedom to employees and provides relief from the monotony of a predictable schedule (Liddicoat, 2003). The findings of this study attest to this, that personal freedom is one of the major advantages of flex-time and one of the key reasons as to why employees opt for flex-time. However, the disadvantages of flex-time according to some employees not using flex-time is that it is unsustainable and leads to lack of coordination among employees using flex-time and employees not using flex-time. Again, non-flex-time users stated that the reason for flex-time being disadvantageous to them is that the nature of their job is such that flex-time is not suited for them. This is evident in the results, as one of the respondents stated, “Since I work in shifts, so if I use flex-time then it means I would have to come to the office and then go back and come again, so it does not make sense for me as I stay quite far from the office. For me using flex-time means my transportation cost goes up, therefore it’s unsustainable”. While one of the respondents said that “flex-time leads to tardiness. For example, employees come late in the office, while some of them take an extended break which leads to unproductively and leads to a lack of focus by the employees while working”.

Regarding advantages and disadvantages of flex-time to employees, the results of this study were similar in some ways to the previous studies (Elbing, Gadon, & Gordon,

1974; Baltes et al.,1999;Valcour, 2007; Drew & Murtagh, 2005; Eaton,2003; Lee et al.,2012), as outlined in the following discussion. The results indicated that for the employees, “flex-time is a tool used by their employers to recruit new employees and maintain employee loyalty to the organization”. The literature review also suggested that that flex-time is indeed a tool used by employers to recruit new employees, keep employees loyal and motivated (Lee, et al., 2012). According to the four respondents, “With the increasing competition, it’s not easy to attract top talent. Flex-time helps in recruiting new employees and also keeps the working population loyal and committed to the company”. The result of this study is a validation of the previous findings. Previous studies also do not examine the role of flex-time policy in influencing the employee’s decision to opt or not opt for flex-time. But this study took the initiative to explore how flex-time policy impacts the employee’s decision regarding flex-time.

The Hindustan Times may be one of the few organizations which have a successful flex-time policy. This is evident in a recent report published in Times of India (2014), which states that most Indian companies don’t have a clear flex-time policy and therefore most of the employees are hesitant to use flex-time. The report also clearly suggests that employees who need to use flex-time have to justify to their superiors.

According to the results of this study, it is not a necessity to use flex-time to get leisure, or preferred lifestyle choice or to be productive for the employees. Some of the previous studies also indicate that it is not a necessity to use flex-time to get leisure time, or to be productive (Galinsky, Bond, & Hill, 2005). The results of the study also suggested that being productive is possible of the employees regardless of using flex-time or not. Sustainability is a relatively new concept in India; therefore there is a lack of awareness regarding sustainability in the general public, and especially in the working class. The

participants were aware of the concept of sustainability but did not were not aware about the technical terminology. Therefore, this study took the initiative to explore the relationship between sustainability and flex-time. The findings indicated that some of the employees select flex-time because they feel that flex-time contributes to sustainability. According to one of the participant said that the only reason for using flex-time would be the freedom to be sustainable. This person said: "If I were to choose flex-time for one reason then it would definitely be sustainability". However, at the same time findings also suggested that, it is not necessary to use flex-time to be sustainable. According to the employees flex-time can only be sustainable if it's designed according to the nature of the job. As stated previously there is a lack of research regarding flex-time and its relationship with sustainability (Wilkinson & Gollan, 2001). This study took the initiative to explore the link between flex-time and sustainability within the The Hindustan Times. Results suggested that sustainability is indeed one of the reasons as to why some employees like to use flex-time.

Earlier studies have also shown that ethnicity and gender of an employee plays a crucial role in influencing their decision to opt for flex-time (Alysa et al., 2008). But the results of this study suggested this is not the case with Hindustan Times. Ethnicity and gender of the employees had no impact in them opting for flex-time

The findings also established that, the primary reasons for employees choosing flex-time in Hindustan Times is leisure, lifestyle choices and sustainability. Overall results indicate some differences in perception of employees using flex time and not using flex time. One difference is that not all of the participants agreed that flex time provides sustainability or an increase in productivity at workplace. Some employees didn't even need flex time to get leisure time or engage in lifestyle choices.

5.2 Relationship of Findings to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) says that when people make decisions about a given behavior, three factors influence their decisions: attitude toward the behaviour (favourable or unfavourable opinions about performing a behaviour), perceived social norms (what important others think they should do), and perceived control (what might prevent performing a given behavior). Further, each of these factors is shaped by beliefs: attitudinal beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs.

This study revealed a number of attitudinal beliefs that appeared to influence attitudes; intentions and actual decisions to participate in flex time. These attitudinal beliefs included the following:

- Will contribute to company loyalty
- Provides job satisfaction
- Increases leisure time for users, but non users say they were able to get enough leisure
- Better able to maintain lifestyle balance, but non users said they could maintain lifestyle balance without flex-time.
- Can spend more time with friends
- Flex-time contributes to sustainability: two users agree and two disagree; and two non-users agree, and two disagree
- Contributes to sustainability because less time spent commuting
- Enhances productivity. Supported by some users, but nonusers disagreed
- Harder for some, because prefer to follow a fixed schedule

- Will make me appear to not be as committed to work

The study also revealed a number of beliefs that likely influence perceived subjective norms, intentions, and actual decisions to participate in flex time. These normative beliefs were not as strongly voiced as the attitudinal beliefs outlined above, but included:

- My employer supports flex time
- My family supports flex time
- My friends support flex time

Perceived behavioural control did not appear to be a significant factor in how people in this study made decisions about whether or not to participate in flex time. The only related belief was the clarity of the company policies regarding flex time. The literature suggests this is sometimes an issue that can impede participation in flex time, but in this study all respondents indicated that the flex time policies were clear.

5.3 Limitations of the Research

The main focus of this research is to identify the specific reasons as to why employees do/don't choose the option of flex time.

The major limitation of the research was the sample size of the participants. There were only eight participants chosen for the study. In order to get more detailed and conclusive data, the sample size should be larger. Also, results of this study cannot be generalized to any organization in India, based on a small case study in one organization. No generalization was attempted, but examples of action taken in Hindustan Times should open the door for future study. Very few organizations implement flex time in India, which prevented the opportunity of doing a comparative analysis between two or more

organizations. A comparative analysis between a numbers of different organizations would have provided a broader perspective on flex time and India.

For data collection only one method was used, semi-structure interviews. This was also a limitation as using one more method of data collection could have allowed the researcher to get more depth in terms of data analysis. Lack of previous research in regards to finding employee's reasons for choosing/ or not choosing flex time was a limitation to the researcher. Another limitation in the research was that, only employees were a part of the study and not the employers. Employers in different organization have different policies and reasons for implementing flex time. Hence, to get an in-depth analysis of the employer's perspective, comparative analysis would have been required. Another limitation of this study is the extent to which respondents understood the concepts of leisure, lifestyle, and sustainability. Since the concepts were not well understood by some respondents, the relationships between these concepts and flex time need to be interpreted with substantial caution. Finally, there is an overlap between the concepts of leisure and lifestyle, as employed in this study. Lifestyle incorporates work, leisure, and "other non-work activities" (such as grocery shopping or a dentist appointment).

5.3 Suggestions for Future research

In order to generalize the findings of this particular study, the research could be expanded in other organizations in India. In particular, future research could focus on sustainability, how well it is understood, and the extent to which sustainability influences decisions such as using flex time.

At the same time flex time is also a growing concept in organizations and it is imperative for the employers to understand the relationship between flex time, leisure, lifestyle, and sustainability. The concept of flex time is designed to empower the employees in their organization. The key finding of the study is that for flex time to be optimally used and to be sustainable, it needs to be designed according to the nature and the demand of the job. However, so far very few companies have mastered the art of carefully designing and implementing effective flexible job models (Bains & Company, 2010).

While many companies offer flexible work models such as part-time, telecommuting and leaves of absence, the research from Bain & Company (2010) shows that it is not enough. To be effective, companies need to ensure that two things happen: First, they must tailor flexible programs to meet specific employee needs. Individual employees are looking for many different things in such offerings and one size does not necessarily fit all. Second, companies need to give visible evidence that these models work and are supported by management. This means companies must promote enough top performers who've taken alternative career paths to convince the doubters as well as demonstrate that top leaders within the organization strongly support these opportunities. Only then do employees feel comfortable taking advantage of flex options, which, in turn, generate greater adoption and eventually lead to a shift in the firm's culture. The rewards can be huge; increased employee satisfaction, loyalty and retention.

This study was guided by the Theory of Planned Behaviour, and incorporated the solicitation phase of this approach, whereby qualitative approaches are used to solicit beliefs that relate to those factors that TPB predicts will influence decisions to

participate in a given behaviour: attitudinal beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs. Future studies could incorporate these beliefs into the design of quantitative questionnaires that could be used with survey methods to measure the relative importance of each factor and belief in shaping decisions to participate in flex time.

5.4 What Companies can do to make Flex-time Models More Effective

Two elements are paramount for success for companies to make flex-time model more effective. One, a tailored set of options and two, demonstrable leadership support combined with visible evidence that the models are working (Cameron, 2013). The last, which amounts to a full support system for flex-job employees to ensure their career aspirations are not jeopardized, begins with a commitment from the highest level of the organization. With this promise, companies can speedily build the right flex-job structure for their company by taking the following steps (Cameron, 2013; Bains & Company, 2010; Stringer, 2010). Organizations can start by gathering input from employees to understand the needs of different segments for flexible models, suggests Bains & Company (2010). Stinger (2010) argues that organizations can also create a thoughtful set of flex options to address the need of each employee segment in the most cost-effective way.

According to Cameron (2013), assigning a vocal and visible flex champion from senior leadership would along with explicitly communicating the options and raising awareness would encourage employees to opt for flex-time. Cameron (2013), further states that by developing a compelling career-management approach that helps workers navigate to the next level by understanding how different flex versus non-flex roles will allow them to develop the required skills for advancement. Organizations also need to

provide supervisors with cultural training and arming them with best practices.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Face to Face Interview

Employees who opt for flex-time

Survey NO: _____ Date: _____ Name: _____ Age: _____ Gender: _____

- 1) How long have you been utilizing the option of flex-time in the organization?
- 2) What has been your experience in the organization in terms of flex-time policy?
- 3) What are your reasons for choosing the option of flex-time?
- 4) Why do you think your organization implement the concept of flex-time?
- 6) What are the advantages of using flex-time?
- 7) Has flex-time increased your leisure time?
- 8) How has your need to be sustainable affected your desire for flex-time?
- 9) Has flex-time improved your work-life balance?
- 10) Do you think that your hierarchical or economic position helps you choosing flex-time?
- 11) What is your primary reason for utilizing flex-time?
 - Sustainability
 - Leisure
 - Lifestyle choices

Employees who do not want flex-time usage

Survey NO.:_____ Date:_____ Name:_____ Age :_____ Gender :_____

- 1) How long have you been working in this organization?
- 2) What has been your experience so far in the organization in terms of flex-time policy?
- 3) What are your reasons for not choosing the option of flex-time?
- 4) Why do you think your organization implement the concept of flex-time?
- 5) What are the disadvantages of choosing the option of flex-time?
- 6) Do you think that you have been able to maintain work-life balance without flex-time?
- 7) Do you think that you have been more productive at work by not utilizing flex-time?
- 8) Do you think that your ability to be sustainable is affected at work by not using flex-time?
- 9) Do you think that by not using flex-time you're still able to enjoy leisure activities?
- 10) How would you feel if your organization made flex-time mandatory?
- 11) If you were made to choose the option of flex-time, then what would be your primary reason for choosing it?
 - Sustainability
 - Leisure
 - Lifestyle choices

Appendix B

Email script for contacting potential participants from the organization in New Delhi, India.

My name is Abhinav Verma. I am a student of Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo, British Columbia, studying Masters in Arts in ‘Sustainable Leisure Management’ and as part of my degree I am conducting a research on why do/ don’t the employees of an organization use the option of flex-time, along with why do employers implement the concept of flex-time in their organization which would also be explored. As a citizen of India I understand the context and the working environment of the country.

As an employee of an organisation where flex time is an option provided, you have been chosen to participate in this study. If you could give a little of your time for an interview with me, in support of this, I would be grateful to you.

Your participation will be completely voluntary and strictly confidential. I will not share your identity or any information in our interview except my University supervisor without your permission.

If you are interested in participating in this study, kindly reply to this mail. The contact details are given below.

Once I have heard from you, it will be anticipated that we will find a mutually satisfactory place, date and time when we can meet.

More information regarding this study and your participation is outlined in the attached research consent form. Please review this information prior to our interview and don’t hesitate to contact me directly if you have any questions or concerns.

Best Regards,

Abhinav Verma,

Student of Masters in Sustainable Leisure Management

Vancouver Island University

Email: abhinav.lex@gmail.com

Contact no: 9958557454

Appendix B: Research Consent Letter

VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY
EXPLORE. DISCOVER. EXCEL.

1st April, 2014

Abhinav Verma, Student
Research investigator
Masters in Sustainable Leisure
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Joanne Schroeder, M.A.
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The purpose of this study is to find out why or why not the employees in the organization use the option of flex-time, and why do employers implement the concept of flex-time in their organizations would be explored. The main hypothesis of this study is that there are primarily three reasons why employees choose the option of flex-time and these reasons are a) leisure b) sustainability c) lifestyle d) others.

The Hindustan Times is an Indian-English language daily newspaper which was founded in 1924. It is the most read English newspaper all over the country. This prestigious organization has been chosen because it's one of the few leading organizations in the country which has implemented the concept of flex-time in India and because

I myself have been an employee at this organization. I have been a part of this organization as feature writer and editor for the paper.

Access to you and your information was provided by Sonal Kalra: An author and editor of HT City, the daily entertainment and lifestyle supplement of Hindustan Times. However as mentioned in detail below your participation is fully voluntary and none of the employees would be forced to participate in the study. Employee's participation and their identity would be kept confidential from everyone except from the research investigator and the university supervisor.

During this study you will be asked to respond to a series of structured and semi-structured interview questions regarding employee's decision to choose or not choose the option of flex-time. With your permission the interview will be recorded and later transcribed. Some hand written notes may also be taken during the interview. It is anticipated that participation in the interview will last approximately 30 minutes at the maximum.

There are no known harms associated with participation in this research. It is assured that the information will not be shared with any third party .With your permission; I would like to use direct quotations from the transcripts of my interview with you. As a result there is also a possibility that you may be identified by the information that you have provided in our interview.

Although your name or identifying information about you will not be shared with your employer or indicated in my report, because of the small number of participants in this study, there is a possibility that you will be identifiable to your employer based on the information you provide.

Only members of the research team including me and my university supervisor will have access to the research data. Data will be stored on password protected locked hard drives stored at Vancouver Island University. Upon completion of the research and

presentation and publication of the research findings, the data will be destroyed. The data will not be available to other researchers for examination.

Your participation is completely voluntary. The names of those who participate in your project will not be provided to their employer.

You may withdraw from the interview at any time for any reason without explanation and without penalty. You may choose not to answer any interview question for any reason. If you decide to withdraw from the study at any point, the information you have already provided will be removed from the study results and destroyed and you will be requested to either return or destroy the consent form.

If you have any concerns about your treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Officer, by telephone at VIU's toll-free number: 1-888-920-2221 (ext. 2665) or by email at reb@viu.ca.

If you have any questions about this research project, or would like more information, please feel free to contact us at the e-mail addresses below:

Abhinav Verma
Student of Masters in Sustainable Leisure Management,
Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo, British Columbia
abhinav.lex@gmail.com
Contact no. 99585575454

I have read and understand this research consent form, specifically noting that the interview will be recorded and that some of my words may be quoted directly. I also understand that I can ask questions during the interview or withdraw at any time. I consent to participate in today's research study.

Participant's Signature

Date

Witness's Signature

Date

