



Article

Unveiling the Relationship between Flexitime and Job Performance: The Role of Family–Work Conflict and the Ability to Cope in a Moderated Mediation Model

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Abstract: Grounded in the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, this study explored the contribution of flexible work arrangements within the increasing digitalization of workplaces. In particular, with a specific focus on what happened when employees teleworked, it examined whether flexitime perceptions, accounting for employees’ perception of control over their working hours, were related to job performance and if family–work conflict mediated this relationship. Additionally, the study investigated if the ability to cope with work tasks moderated the relationships between flexitime and both family–work conflict and job performance. The study was conducted in an Italian research institute involving 598 respondents engaged in hybrid work with over two years of remote working experience. The SPSS Process macro was used, and findings showed a positive direct association between flexitime and job performance. Intriguingly, no indirect effect of flexitime on job performance through family–work conflict was observed. However, the introduction of the ability to cope in the model generated a significant mediation at specific levels of the moderator. The study highlighted the moderating role of the ability to cope in the relationships between flexitime and family–work conflict on one side and job performance on the other. This research provides insights into the complexities of hybrid work and discusses the advantages of flexitime and the intricate interplay it has with family–work conflict and job performance. The study concludes with theoretical and practical implications, offering guidance for both researchers and practitioners navigating the multifaceted realm of flexible work arrangements.

Keywords: flexitime; ability to cope with work; family–work conflict; job performance; hybrid work



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1. Introduction

Recent health events and the growing digitalization of services are pushing organizations to extend the adoption and implementation of flexible work arrangements (FWA), defined as “alternative work options that permit the execution of work beyond the conventional temporal and spatial constraints of a standard workday” (Rau 2003). Eurostat data reveal that the share of employed people in the EU who usually worked from home increased by 8% between 2019 and 2021 (European Commission Eurostat 2021). In the US, nearly one-third of American employees seem to have been involved in flexible work arrangements in recent years (Shifrin and Michel 2022).

Flexible work arrangements include both flexitime and flexplace. The former refers to employees having degrees of autonomy over their working hours (Shirmohammadi et al. 2022); the latter refers to situations in which employees can fulfill their work responsibilities from locations beyond the traditional workplace, such as during teleworking. Scholarly attention has often focused on analyzing flexible work arrangements, with an emphasis on flexplace, which includes practices such as remote work, telework, work from home,

and hybrid work (Shifrin and Michel 2022; Toscano and Zappalà 2020). On the other hand, it is crucial to recognize how these flexplace measures are often accompanied by flextime and put the right emphasis on the psychological implications of the coexistence of these two phenomena.

Flextime enables individuals to craft their work schedules autonomously, giving employees greater control over their working times and potentially favoring a balance between family and work (Christensen and Staines 1990) and enhancing job performance (Baltes et al. 1999; Michel et al. 2011). However, while flextime offers increased flexibility, it also has the potential to disorient employees by disrupting the structured routine that typically guides their workdays. This disruption might lead to individuals either working excessively or struggling to manage their time effectively (Spieler et al. 2017). Additionally, the absence of a fixed schedule may create unintended expectations among family members, who may assume greater availability for family-related responsibilities, thus potentially increasing family–work conflict. These factors pose challenges in achieving a harmonious balance between family and work commitments, potentially negatively impacting job performance (Allen et al. 2015; Toscano and Zappalà 2020).

With a specific focus on what happened when employees teleworked (flexplace), this study aimed to explore whether flextime was related to job performance. Furthermore, it examined whether flextime is negatively related to family–work conflict and whether it indirectly affected job performance through family–work conflict. Additionally, by focusing on individuals' capacity to effectively handle work challenges and to better understand the link between flextime and family–work conflict, which has yielded inconsistent findings in previous studies (Allen et al. 2013; Michel et al. 2011), this research investigated whether the ability to cope (AC) with work influenced the connections between flextime and both family–work conflict and job performance.

The research model is depicted in Figure 1.

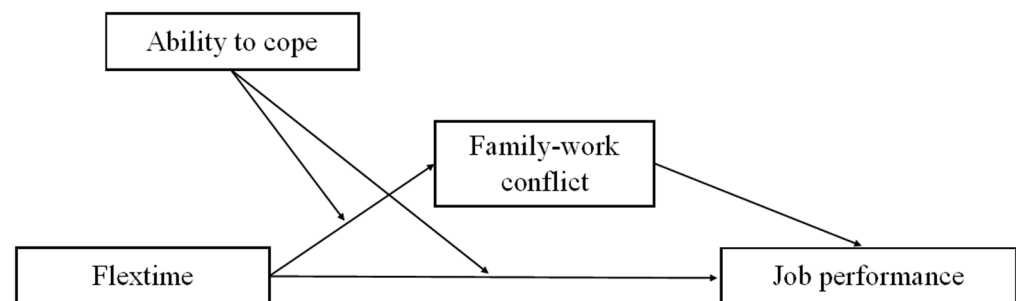


Figure 1. Research model.

This study is rooted in the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll 2001; Hobfoll et al. 2018), a comprehensive framework that explains how individuals strive to acquire, protect, and maintain those resources that ensure their well-being and resilience in the face of stressors. The first theoretical contribution of this study is to assume that flextime is a resource that can promote job performance. Second, by identifying a specific mechanism through which flextime is related to job performance—namely, family–work conflict as a mediator—this study aims to identify why flextime may increase job performance. Third, the study integrates the role of personal capacities in dealing with work—here, the ability to cope—as an important potential booster of the positive effects of flextime on employees' work. All these contributions are intended to be made in a context in which hybrid work is implemented and with reference to the perceptions experienced while telework (flexplace) is adopted. Finally, the study aims to provide organizations and human resources (HR) professionals with first-hand knowledge that may guide the adoption of flextime, especially in an organizational context where teleworking is also practiced, such as the public and scientific institutions examined here.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1. Flextime and Job Performance

The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, proposed by [Hobfoll et al. \(2018\)](#), suggests that individuals are motivated to accumulate and protect resources to better adapt to their work environment. Resources are broadly defined and include objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies valued by individuals ([Hobfoll 2001](#)). Within this framework, flextime—that is, the degree of autonomy or independence employees have in deciding their work schedule ([Allen et al. 2015](#); [Baltes et al. 1999](#); [Rau 2003](#))—can be viewed as a valuable resource that enhances job performance by enabling employees to manage their time more effectively and align their work with their peak productivity periods.

Flextime can be considered a resource because it allows employees to perform tasks when they feel most energized or when they are less burdened by non-work responsibilities. This contrasts with a fixed schedule, which may not align with optimal resource availability. Essentially, managing and completing work tasks when individuals are at their peak performance or are free from personal obligations can enhance overall productivity.

Several studies have highlighted the benefits of flextime. A meta-analysis by [Baltes et al. \(1999\)](#) reported that flextime is related to increased job performance, job satisfaction, decreased absenteeism, and greater satisfaction with work schedules. Flextime significantly enhances job performance by providing employees with greater control over their work schedules and increasing work engagement. Employees with flextime options are more engaged in their work, which in turn boosts their performance ([Naqshbandi et al. 2024](#); [Rocereto et al. 2011](#)).

Empirical evidence further supports these findings. [Martínez-Sánchez et al. \(2007\)](#) analyzed responses from 156 companies in Spain and revealed a significant relationship between the adoption of internal flexibility, including flextime, and greater firm performance. Similarly, [Chatterjee et al. \(2022\)](#) reported a positive relationship between remote work flexibility, resulting from work time flexibility and organizational performance.

Moreover, research by [Kelly et al. \(2014\)](#) examined the effects of flextime on employee well-being and job performance, finding that flexible work arrangements lead to better work–life balance, reduced stress, and enhanced job satisfaction, all of which contribute to improved job performance. Finally, a study by [Shockley and Allen \(2012\)](#) found that employees with flexible work schedules experienced higher levels of job satisfaction and lower levels of burnout, further underscoring the potential positive impact of flextime on employee performance. Given the support from the literature and empirical studies, we aim to also extend these research insights to a scenario of flexplace (teleworking), and thus we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *When employees telework, their perception of flextime is positively associated with job performance.*

2.2. The Mediating Effect of Family–Work Conflict

The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, proposed by [Hobfoll et al. \(2018\)](#), argues that individuals possess and seek to conserve limited resources to meet their needs and cope with demands. Work and family roles often compete for these limited resources, leading to potential conflicts. Flextime can thus be considered a valuable resource that helps reconcile family and work life by supplementing individuals' existing resource reservoirs. By providing autonomy and freedom, flextime empowers workers to manage their time effectively, allocate it to different roles, and mitigate potential role conflict.

According to COR theory, family–work conflict arises when there is an imbalance in managing family and work roles and expectations, leading to the depletion of available resources. This conflict occurs when individuals face a decrease, or threat of decrease, in one resource in favor of another, resulting in insufficient time and energy to fulfill work tasks effectively, thereby reducing job performance. [Christensen and Staines \(1990\)](#) observed that flextime decreases work/family conflict, aligning with the COR theory's

premise that effective resource management mitigates resource depletion. Recent research has validated these data (Ongaki 2019) and further explored this relationship, revealing that the impact of flextime varies across different occupational and cultural contexts. For example, it is more effective in reducing family–work conflict in lower-skilled occupations and less effective in high-performance work environments where long hours are expected (Chung and Booker 2023).

Research indicates that lower family–work conflict relates to greater job performance. Wang et al. (2021) highlighted the negative relationship between family–work conflict and job performance, suggesting that family–work conflict impairs job performance by draining critical resources such as time and energy. A recent study by Moreira and colleagues found that family–work conflict was negatively related to task performance, whereas the relationship between work–family conflict and task performance was not significant (Moreira et al. 2023). Empirical evidence also suggests that increased job autonomy in remote working conditions enables individuals to balance work and rest better, benefiting both job performance and well-being (Wang et al. 2021).

Further studies support these findings. Masuda et al. (2012) found that flexible work schedules are associated with higher job satisfaction due to better work–life balance and reduced stress. Similarly, Solanki (2013) reported that employees with flexible schedules experience less stress and higher job satisfaction, leading to improved job performance.

Furthermore, findings by Michel et al. (2011) suggest that conflict between family and work can mediate the relationship between job demands and job performance, implying that managing this conflict can enhance job outcomes. Even Byron (2005) supports the notion that conflict between family and work negatively affects job performance, and that effective management of this conflict through resources like flextime can mitigate these effects.

To conclude, studies specific to flexible work arrangements, such as Allen et al. (2013), have shown that these arrangements, including flextime, significantly reduce family–work conflict. This reduction in conflict enables employees to invest more resources in their work, thereby enhancing job performance. Additionally, Gajendran and Harrison (2007) conducted a meta-analysis that highlighted the positive effects of telecommuting, intended in a broad way, on the balance between family and work and job performance, further supporting the idea that flexibility in work arrangements can lead to better job outcomes.

Given these insights and measuring these variables referring to the condition in which telework (flexplace) is adopted, we propose that family–work conflict acts as a mediator in the relationship between flextime and job performance. Specifically, flextime decreases family–work conflict, which, in turn, increases job performance. Thus, we posit the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *When employees telework, their perception of family–work conflict mediates the relationship between flextime and job performance.*

2.3. The Moderating Effect of Ability to Cope

The theoretical perspective that frames flextime as a resource, according to the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll et al. 2018), highlights that flextime disrupts the negative spiral draining energy to manage family–work conflict. Flextime acts as a catalyst for a resource gain spiral due to the work flexibility it introduces. However, despite the studies previously cited, the literature on flextime still shows doubts regarding the mechanisms explaining how it impacts outcomes such as family–work conflict (Allen et al. 2013) and job performance (Kattenbach et al. 2010). This gap motivates a deeper exploration of the connection between flextime, family–work conflict, and job performance, with a moderator to provide a more refined understanding of these relationships (Wu and Zumbo 2008).

Recognizing that flextime, although a resource, requires effective management of work-related aspects, we consider employee ability to cope (AC) as a potential moderator in the relationships between flextime, family–work conflict (FWC), and job performance. Applying self-efficacy theory (Bandura 1997) to work contexts, AC refers to “employees’ ability to face and cope with their work tasks in the nuances of practically managing problems, understanding what is needed to do to get work done, and being confident in how to perform work when it presents snags or impediments” (Toscano et al. 2022b). Individuals with a strong AC are expected to handle the challenges associated with flextime effectively, preventing the depletion of valuable resources and enabling the necessary skills and coping mechanisms to harness the benefits of this work arrangement efficiently.

Self-efficacy theory posits that individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to view challenging tasks as something to be mastered rather than avoided (Bandura 1997). This theory has been extended to the workplace, suggesting that employees with higher coping abilities are better equipped to manage their work tasks and responsibilities, thus mitigating stress and conflict (Salanova et al. 2012). For employees with greater AC, flextime becomes a resource that facilitates resource gain, enabling them to balance work and family responsibilities and reducing family–work conflict. Conversely, for individuals with lower AC, flextime may pose challenges in effectively managing time and expectations from family and colleagues. Less-developed coping mechanisms might hinder their ability to navigate the demands of flextime, potentially leading to increased family–work conflict.

Empirical studies seem to support the moderating role of AC in work-related outcomes. For instance, Ng and Feldman (2009) found that individuals with higher coping abilities reported lower levels of job stress and better job performance. Similarly, Dugan et al. (2012) highlighted that effective coping strategies can mitigate the negative effects of conflict between work and family, leading to improved job performance and well-being. These findings suggest that the ability to cope can significantly influence how employees perceive and utilize flextime as a resource. Furthermore, studies have shown that employees with higher coping abilities are more likely to leverage flexible work arrangements to their advantage, experiencing reduced conflict between work and family spheres and enhanced job satisfaction (Lapierre et al. 2008). This underscores the importance of considering individual differences in coping abilities when examining the effects of flextime on work and family outcomes. Given these initial insights, we aim to extend this reasoning also to a flexplace scenario, and we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *When employees telework, their perception of ability to cope positively moderates the relationship between flextime and family–work conflict.*

In our concluding proposition, we address the ongoing debate on the relationship between flextime and job performance, which lacks unanimous consensus (Kattenbach et al. 2010). Drawing on our previous arguments and aligning with the COR theory (Hobfoll et al. 2018), we introduce the idea that the ability to cope (AC) positively moderates the relationship between flextime and job performance. Our rationale is that robust coping abilities empower employees to navigate the temporal and workload-related challenges inherent in flextime arrangements. In the context of COR theory, individuals with strong coping skills can prevent resource depletion and create an environment conducive to harnessing the benefits of flexible work arrangements. This proactive coping mechanism contributes to a more favorable setting where employees can effectively manage the demands of flextime while improving job performance.

Building on this theoretical foundation, we draw parallels to previous research, such as the study by Wang and Xie (2023), which explores the contribution of role breadth self-efficacy as a construct reflecting the ability to cope with work-related challenges, particularly those involving extra-role behaviors. This study revealed positive correlations between flextime and role breadth self-efficacy, reinforcing the idea that coping abilities play a pivotal role in adapting to flexible work arrangements. Similarly,

Greenglass and Fiksenbaum (2009) discussed proactive coping as an approach where individuals use their resources to prevent future stressors. Ability to cope, similarly to proactive coping, may help in anticipating potential conflicts and managing them before they escalate. Further studies highlight that effective coping strategies can mitigate the negative effects of conflict between family and work domains, leading to improved job performance and well-being (Dugan et al. 2012). Aligning with these insights, we emphasize that AC enhances the positive effects of flextime, creating a resource gain spiral when two positive resources combine. Considering these factors, and here focusing on a flexplace scenario, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *When employees telework, their perception of ability to cope positively moderates the relationship between flextime and job performance.*

3. Methods

3.1. Participants and Procedure

Our research involved 598 participants from a prominent national research institute in Italy, comprising a central unit and ten territorial branches. The participants included scientists and administrative staff, covering various roles such as functional unit directors, researchers, technicians, and administrative personnel. Researchers within the institute conduct geological research projects, analyze geological samples, develop programs/models for geological data analysis, conduct experiments, and present research projects. The administrative staff handles tasks such as budgeting, financial management, procurement of research tools, human resource tasks, and health and safety compliance.

The study was conducted in May–June 2022, during which the organization had already implemented both flexplace and flextime for the past two years. To ensure anonymity and unbiased responses, no demographic information was collected. This decision was also influenced by the fact that this research project originated as a collateral investigation of an organizational diagnostic survey with feedback to management. In such a context, the collection of personal data could have further undermined participants' trust and willingness to provide honest responses.

Approximately 12% of the respondents worked in the central administration, while the remaining percentage was distributed among branches across Italy. The considered organization adopted even flexplace. Regarding flexplace (telework) intensity, 41.7% of the employees teleworked a maximum of two days a week, while the remaining part teleworked three or more days a week. In terms of roles, 3.5% were unit directors/managers, 64% were researchers, 20.4% were technicians, and 12% were administrative staff.

Following standard ethical practices, participants were provided with information about the study's objectives, their right to withdraw, and the assurance of confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before administering the questionnaire.

3.2. Measures

To measure flextime, or the autonomy to decide one's work schedules, we adopted the six items of the flextime scale of the Quality of Telework questionnaire developed by Miglioretti et al. (2023). An example of a scale item is "(Think about how you manage time at work. . . I autonomously/independently decide when to work during the day)". The response interval ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (ever). The internal consistency measured through Cronbach's α was 0.89 in this study.

To measure family–work conflict, we used three items from the scale developed by Netemeyer et al. (1996) and recorded the responses on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). An example item is "(Referring to your current teleworking condition...) I have to postpone work due to family needs when I am at home". The internal consistency measured through Cronbach's α was 0.92 in this study.

Ability to cope was measured by a 4-item scale adapted by Staples et al. (1999) from an original role ambiguity/coping ability scale developed by House et al. (1983) and already validated in Italian in a previous study (Toscano et al. 2022b). Responses were recorded on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). Sample items include “(When I am teleworking. . .) I am usually sure about how to do my job” and “I know how to handle problems that arise at work”. Cronbach’s α was 0.82 in this study.

Job performance during telework was assessed using a 7-item measure developed by Toscano and Zappalà (2021). Participants rated their performance during teleworking using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = very poor, 7 = excellent). The scale assesses performance across seven facets of work functioning, i.e., quality of work, productivity (amount of work completed), adherence to deadlines, speed of responses to problems and opportunities, taking initiative, communication of work progress, and overall performance. Cronbach’s α was 0.95 in this study.

3.3. Data Analysis

To test the factorial structure of the measurement model, we ran two confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs). The first CFA tested a single-factor model in which all items were grouped into one factor; the second tested a model in which all items were grouped into their respective factors in a 4-factor analysis. For the internal consistency and reliability of the scales, Cronbach’s alphas were computed, and descriptive analyses and Pearson’s correlations were performed. Finally, all the hypotheses were tested using the PROCESS macro; in particular, Model 4 for the mediation analysis and Model 8 for moderated mediation. Variables used for the moderated mediation were centered. Furthermore, bootstrap confidence intervals at 5000 replications were used to infer the significance of the models. All the analyses were performed using SPSS and AMOS, version 27.

4. Results

4.1. Reliability and Validity of the Measures

To assess the factorial structure of our model, we conducted two confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs). The model in which all the items were aggregated into a single factor showed poor fit indices (chi-square = 14,702.3; df = 170; chi-square/df = 86.48; RMSEA = 0.38; SRMR = 0.29; CFI = 0.90; TLI = 0.89). Conversely, the model grouping the four measures into their respective factors exhibited more favorable fit indices (chi-square = 587.6; df = 164; chi-square/df = 3.58; RMSEA = 0.06; SRMR = 0.05; CFI = 0.99; TLI = 0.99). Moreover, factor loadings, ranging from 0.66 to 0.96, confirmed the significant relationships of the items with their designated factors. Considering these results, we argue that the measures we used have good validity and, as indicated by Cronbach’s alpha values reported in the previous paragraph, good reliability.

4.2. Descriptive Analyses and Correlations

The descriptive statistics and correlations are reported in Table 1. The descriptive statistics show that the average flextime ($M = 3.91$; $SD = 0.83$), performance ($M = 5.82$; $SD = 1.02$), and ability to cope ($M = 6.22$; $SD = 0.90$) averages are above the midpoint value of the scale, while the family–work conflict average ($M = 2.19$; $SD = 1.47$) was relatively lower than the midpoint value. All variables were significantly correlated, except for the association between flextime and family–work conflict, which was not significant ($r = 0.05$; n.s.). Notably, job performance showed robust correlations with family–work conflict ($r = -0.44$; $p < 0.001$) and AC ($r = 0.54$; $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, weaker but still positive correlations were observed between flextime and the AC ($r = 0.15$; $p < 0.001$) and between flextime and job performance ($r = 0.13$; $p < 0.001$). AC was negatively correlated with family–work conflict, as expected ($r = -0.41$; $p < 0.001$).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and Pearson’s correlations among variables.

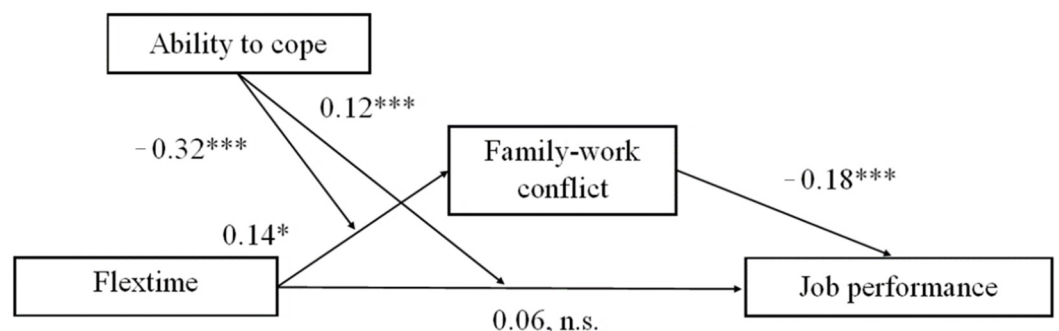
Variables	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Flextime	3.91	0.83			
2. Family-work conflict	2.19	1.47	0.05		
3. Ability to cope	6.22	0.90	0.15 ***	−0.41 ***	
4. Job performance	5.82	1.02	0.13 ***	−0.44 ***	0.54 ***

Note. *** $p < 0.001$.

4.3. Model Testing

The direct relationship between flextime and job performance (H1) and the mediation hypothesis (H4) were tested using Model 4 of the PROCESS macro. The remaining hypotheses involving moderated mediations were tested using Model 8 of the PROCESS macro.

Simple mediation analysis showed a positive relationship between flextime and job performance ($B = 0.18$; $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 1. In contrast, the relationship between flextime and family–work conflict was not statistically significant ($B = 0.06$; $p = 0.40$). However, the relationship between family–work conflict and job performance was negative and significant ($B = -0.31$; $p < 0.001$). The indirect effect of flextime on job performance through family–work conflict was statistically non-significant (point estimate = -0.02 ; 95% CI = $[-0.07, 0.03]$). This result does not support Hypothesis 2 and highlights a direct-only non-mediation effect (Hair et al. 2018), as both the direct ($B = 0.18$; 95% CI = $[0.09, 0.27]$) and total effects ($B = 0.16$; 95% CI = $[0.06, 0.26]$) of flextime on job performance were significant. Despite these partially encouraging results, the moderated mediation analysis was conducted using Model 8 of the SPSS PROCESS Macro, as shown in Figure 2.

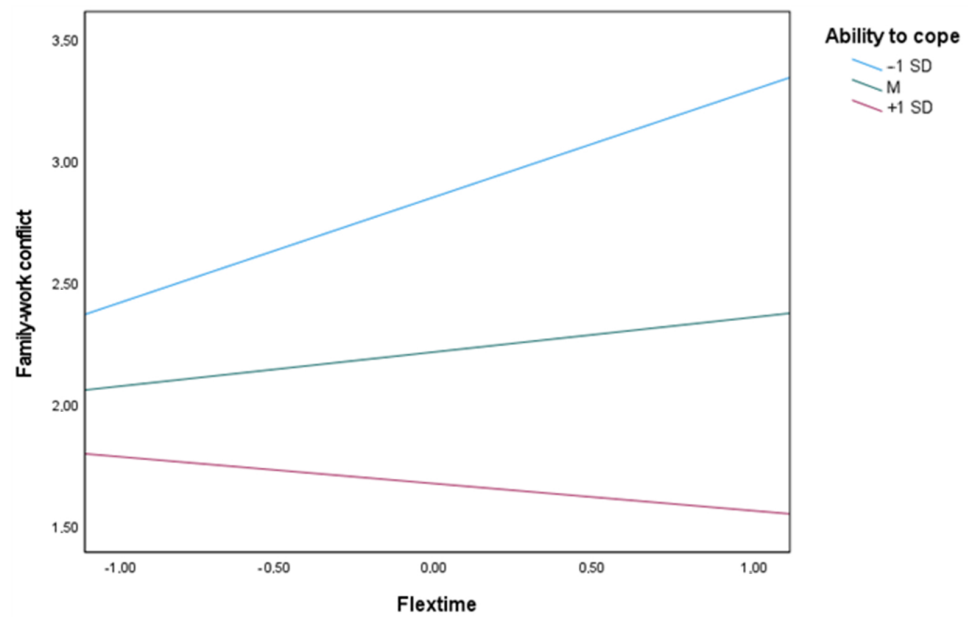


Note: * $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$, n.s. = not significant.

Figure 2. Tested research model.

The inclusion of the ability to cope as a moderator in the path between flextime and family-work conflict revealed a positive and significant direct relationship between flextime and family–work conflict ($B = 0.14$; $p < 0.001$). This relationship was moderated by AC ($B = -0.32$; $p < 0.001$), partially confirming Hypothesis 3, which initially postulated a positive sign. This change in the direct effect aligns with Muller et al.’s (2005) assertion that the relationship between two variables depends on the moderator.

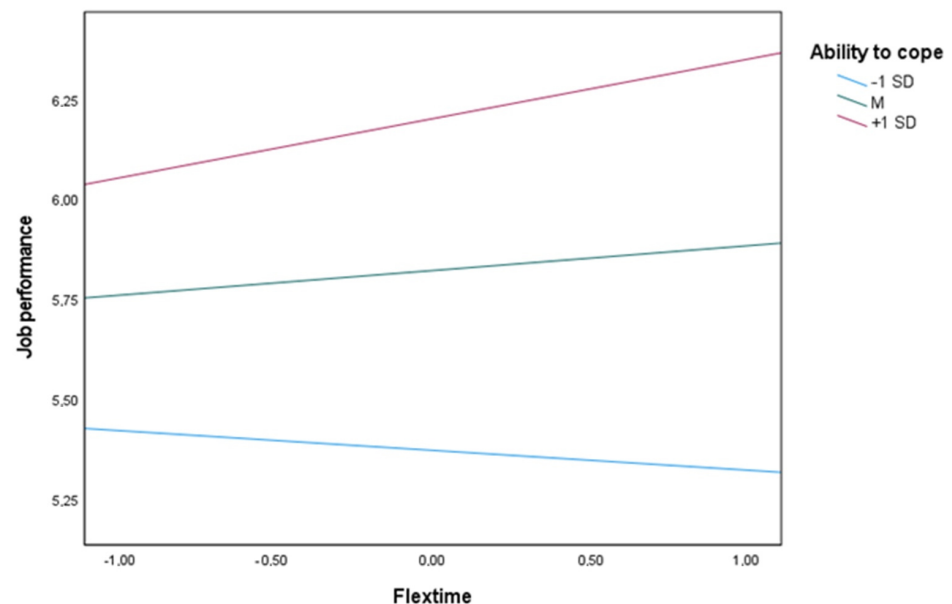
Examining the moderation effect at three values of AC (-1 SD, M, $+1$ SD) showed that flextime was positively associated with family–work conflict only at lower (-1 SD; $B = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$) and average ($B = 0.14$, $p = 0.03$) values of AC, while it was negative and not significant at higher ($+1$ SD) values of AC ($B = -0.11$, $p = 0.19$). This interaction is plotted in Figure 3.



Note: The interaction effect was not significant at AC = +1 SD

Figure 3. Moderation effect of the ability to cope in the relationship between flextime and family–work conflict.

Finally, Hypothesis 4, which proposed that AC moderated the relationship between flextime and job performance, was supported by the results. The AC positively and significantly moderated the relationship ($B = 0.12; p < 0.001$). However, the conditional relationship between flextime and job performance was significant only at higher (+1 SD) values of AC ($B = 0.15; p < 0.001$), and not significant at average ($B = 0.06; p = 0.17$) and lower ($-1\text{ SD}; B = -0.05; p = 0.35$) values of AC. This interaction is illustrated in Figure 4.



Note: The interaction effect was not significant at AC = -1 SD and AC = M

Figure 4. Moderation effect of ability to cope in the relationship between flextime and job performance.

Finally, the index of the conditional indirect effect between flextime and job performance confirmed the moderated mediation; in other words, flextime had an indirect effect on job performance through family–work conflict conditional on the level of the ability to cope. Although marginal, it confirms that there exists a moderated mediation in the model (index = 0.06) with 95% CI = [0.03, 0.09], although it indicates that flextime may feed, and not hinder, the emergence of family–work conflict. Table 2 shows the conditional indirect effect at three values (−1 SD, M, +1 SD) of AC, highlighting that only at a lower level of AC (−1 SD) was the indirect effect of flextime on job performance negative and significant, while at other values of AC, this indirect effect was very close to zero and, more importantly, not significant.

Table 2. Conditional indirect effects of flextime on job performance via family–work conflict at three values of ability to cope.

AC Value	Effect	Boot SE	95% CI LLCI	95% CI ULCI	Significant
−1 SD	−0.08	0.02	−0.13	−0.03	Yes
M	−0.02	0.01	−0.06	0.00	No
1 SD	0.02	0.02	−0.01	0.05	No

Note. 95% CI: 95% confidence interval of indirect effects estimated by the bootstrap method; Boot SE: standard error; LLCI: lower limit confidence interval; ULCI: upper limit confidence interval; M: mean; SD: standard deviation.

5. Discussion

This study considered a sample of almost six hundred employees from a prominent Italian national research institute, where both flexplace, in the form of hybrid work, and flextime were permitted. In the analyzed hybrid context, the primary focus was on the mediating role of family–work conflict experienced by employees while teleworking in the relationship between flextime and job performance while teleworking. Additionally, we explored whether coping ability moderated the relationships between flextime and family–work conflict, as well as between flextime and job performance. Even in this case, the measures specifically referred to the conditions under which they teleworked. As hypothesized, flextime was positively correlated with reported employees’ job performance during teleworking. This finding aligns with prior empirical research examining the correlations between flextime and teleworker performance, as observed in the studies by [Baltes et al. \(1999\)](#) and [Chatterjee et al. \(2022\)](#). This result underlines that having some control over the work schedule is an important job resource that can mitigate the negative impact of remote work and improve, as shown in this study, the perception of good job performance.

The study’s second hypothesis delved into the potential mediating role of family–work conflict in the relationship between flextime and job performance. In contrast to our expectations, our results did not support that family–work conflict positively mediated this relationship. [Christensen and Staines \(1990\)](#) highlighted in their review that although flextime may help to solve work–family conflict, its effectiveness might be compromised in teleworking conditions where boundaries between work and personal life become more permeable.

Factors such as work intensification, a documented outcome of teleworking ([Kelliher and Anderson 2010](#)), and the preference for segregating family and work roles may outweigh the neutralizing effects of flextime as a resource ([Allen et al. 2015](#)). This implies that flextime, although often considered a useful resource for mitigating family–work conflict, may not only fall short in this respect but also potentially trigger such conflict. Our results go in this direction when the ability to cope was included in our model as a moderator in the relationships between flextime and family–work conflict. In this scenario, the direct link between flextime and family–work conflict was found to be positive, with a negative interaction effect on the ability to cope. Our results suggest that when employees have lower levels of AC, flextime may become riskier because an increase in flextime may correspond to an increase in family–work conflict. Conversely, the relationship be-

tween flextime and family–work conflict was shown to be unaffected by higher levels of employees' AC.

Different conclusions can be drawn for the relationship between flextime and job performance, whose relationship is positively moderated by the ability to cope. In this case, however, the relationship between flextime and job performance was nonsignificant when flextime was coupled with low or moderate levels of AC, whereas a positive relationship could be observed when employees have greater levels of AC.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

The outcomes of this study offer valuable insights for researchers exploring the complex relationship between flextime and job performance, suggesting potential pathways for future investigations. First, this research underscores the fundamentally positive connection between flextime and job performance, aligning with the literature (e.g., Michel et al. 2011). Based on the conservation of resources (COR) theory proposed by Hobfoll et al. (2018), the findings suggest that providing individuals with the flexibility to determine their work schedule can yield positive outcomes regarding individual performance. However, intriguing questions arise for subsequent research, particularly concerning the potential impacts of adopting flextime procedures on group or organizational structures/divisions.

In contrast to initial expectations, the study describes an unexpected relationship between flextime and family–work conflict. Despite the positive correlation between flextime and job performance, flextime may play a negligible or even triggering role in the emergence of family–work conflict among workers. This finding challenges the conventional belief on the protective nature of flextime against family–work conflict, a belief already questioned by Allen et al. (2013). Our findings examine the effectiveness of flextime as a resource for managing the delicate balance between family and work commitments. It is worth noting that such a result, although referred to as a teleworking condition, was observed in a population experiencing both flextime and flexplace in a hybrid work environment, thus alternating work in person and remotely. Future investigations might examine whether analogous results are observed in settings where flextime is applied in full in-person or full remote work.

A third noteworthy theoretical consideration stems from the ability to cope and its substantial influence on the relationships under scrutiny. In the relationship between flextime and family–work conflict, coping helps elucidate why flextime might be detrimental to certain workers, particularly those who perceive a lower mastery of their work tasks. This positive association between flextime and family–work conflict appears in workers with a lower capacity to cope with work-related events. Conversely, the ability to cope emerges as a potent booster of the direct relationship between flextime and job performance, which suggests that individuals who are highly proficient in managing and coping with their work take advantage of flextime to perceive their job performance as enhanced. Notably, the relationship between flextime and job performance becomes neutral, or indifferent, for workers with lower or moderate levels of AC. These findings suggest that the ability to cope may exert a limited positive effect on the relationship between flextime and job performance without any negative impact. These novel insights, which have not been previously studied with such a specific focus on the teleworking (flexplace) condition, warrant validation through further empirical evidence for confirmation or refutation.

5.2. Practical Implications

This study also offers many practical implications for organizations and practitioners seeking to leverage flextime policies to enhance employee well-being and job performance. First, acknowledging the positive link between flextime and job performance underscores the importance of strategically integrating flexible work schedules into the broader organizational framework. Organizations should then consider taking advantage of the benefits of flexibility by enabling employees to tailor work schedules (or at least work schedules of tasks with limited interdependence with colleagues or customers) to their individual

preferences, potentially contributing to heightened productivity. However, our results also highlight how a tailored HR approach is essential, particularly considering the identified relationship between flextime and family–work conflict, because lower levels of AC appear to amplify the risk of family–work conflict for employees utilizing flextime. Adapting flextime policies to the diverse needs and competencies of employees is crucial. The ability to cope varies among individuals. Thus, organizations should customize flexibility options and, at the same time, provide additional support or resources to assist employees with lower coping abilities in effectively managing potential challenges associated with flexible work arrangements. In this vein, employee training programs focusing on coping skills represent a proactive measure that organizations can take to mitigate the potential negative consequences of flextime.

Building on this, organizations may consider implementing comprehensive work–life integration programs. These programs should extend beyond the mere provision of flexible schedules, encompassing initiatives that address family–work conflict. By doing so, organizations can create a supportive ecosystem that aids employees in developing effective coping strategies and promotes a healthier work–life balance. Additionally, organizations might benefit from assessing employees' coping skills before authorizing flextime and flexplace to ensure that those who are less equipped to handle such arrangements receive the necessary support and resources.

In such a process, we underline the need for continuous monitoring and evaluation of flextime policies as essential for organizations, which may require informed adjustments over time. This iterative process allows organizations to stay attuned to the evolving needs of their workforce, ensuring that flextime initiatives remain aligned with individual well-being and overarching performance objectives.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

While our study provides valuable insights into the relationships between flextime, family–work conflict, and employee job performance, it is essential to acknowledge and address several limitations that pave the way for future investigations. One primary limitation concerns the cross-sectional nature of our study, which does not allow us to establish any causal relationships between the investigated variables. Furthermore, the absence of demographic data of the study participants, such as age, gender, or seniority, represents another notable limitation. Previous studies (e.g., [Toscano et al. 2022a](#)) have shown that demographic factors such as gender exert significant influence on the ability to cope. This consideration underlines the need for a more comprehensive exploration of our findings considering demographic variables.

Generalizability poses another challenge, as our sample from an Italian national research institute does not represent the broader scenario of the workforce. The applicability of our findings to different countries or industries is uncertain due to variations in contextual factors, including task content, educational attainment, and resource availability. Despite this limitation, the robust size effect of our results, coupled with a reasonably large sample size, lends partial support to the validity of the phenomena under study within the specific context examined. Furthermore, it is essential to note that the study specifically examined the impact of flextime on family–work conflict and not on work–family conflict. Given the different characteristics and relationships that these variables have with other constructs ([Byron 2005](#)), this distinction underlines the importance of limiting the application of our results to the specific relationships between family and work domains.

A final, potentially controversial limitation arises from results about flextime observed in a context that adopted hybrid work. This raises questions about the validity of our findings for scenarios involving purely in-person or exclusively teleworking arrangements. While our study offers valuable insights into the interplay between flextime, family–work conflict, and employee job performance, future research should consider these limitations and consider more diverse samples, longitudinal designs, and a finer granularity of participant characteristics to enrich our understanding of these complex dynamics.

6. Conclusions

This study investigated the impact of flextime and the ability to cope with work on family–work conflict and job performance in telework using a sample of almost six hundred employees of an Italian research institute. The results revealed that flextime is positively related to family–work conflict, especially for employees with lower levels of AC. In contrast, flextime is positively related to job performance when employees have a greater AC. The study sheds light on the relevant role that the ability to cope with work tasks and challenges may have on personal (family–work conflict) and work outcomes (job performance) of flexible work arrangements, particularly flextime.

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