

INSIGHTS INTO TIME & PLACE MANAGEMENT

*Does the influence of Time & Place
Management (TPM) policies on job
performance differ by worker age?*

Based on an analysis by Matthijs Bal, Ph.D., Reader at the School of Management,
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and Nijmegen, Radboud University Nijmegen

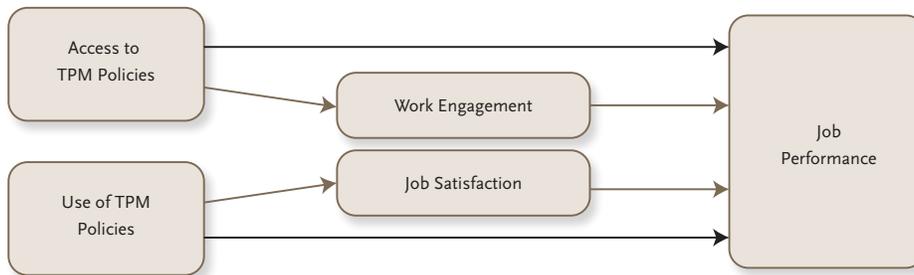
ABOUT THE STUDY

Employers provide Time and Place Management (TPM) policies for a range of reasons, such as to help employees to manage work and family responsibilities and to improve employees' attitudes toward their work and workplace. In addition, they hope – but often do not know for certain – that the effects of TPM policies on employee attitudes will translate into higher job performance as well. However, little research has examined the mechanisms through which TPM policies might influence job performance, and even less is known about whether these relationships differ for older and younger workers.

Time & Place Management (TPM) policies “give employees greater options and control over where, when, how, and how much work gets done.”

Matthijs Bal (Reader at the School of Management, University of Bath) and Annet De Lange (University of Applied Sciences Arnhem and Nijmegen, Radboud University Nijmegen) used the Age & Generations Study data and Generations of Talent Study data to investigate the question of whether TPM policies lead to higher job performance, and whether those effects differ by age. Their study considered availability and use of TPM policies in job performance separately, to take into account some of the diverse ways that TPM policies may affect outcomes (See Box 1). As shown in Figure 1, they hypothesized that TPM policies would affect job performance positively, both directly and indirectly through increased job engagement and job satisfaction.

Figure 1. The Effect of TPM Policies on Job Performance: Expected Relationships



Source: Based on Bal and de Lange, under review.

Key Insights

1. **TPM policy use and access both matter, but not in a straightforward way.**

Does access to TPM policies or use of TPM policies matter more? Knowing the answer to this question is of practical importance to employers. Should they consider adopting a TPM policy, such as job sharing, that may have low take-up rates (i.e., high access but low use)? Should they consider limiting certain policies, such as telecommuting, to occupational groups that are most likely to use them (i.e., low access but high use)?

In this study, when employees in industrialized countries have access to TPM policies, they have higher work engagement and organizational commitment. This was true even though they controlled for the effect of actually using those policies, suggesting that employees see TPM policies as evidence that their employer cares about them, even if they do not need to use those policies currently. Yet, the results of this study also indicate that when employees in industrialized nations use TPM policies, their job performance is higher.

2. **Age is a critical factor in explaining the effect of TPM on job performance.**

- Among younger workers, use of TPM policies is related to higher engagement and satisfaction. Perhaps they perceive these policies as aspects of a good job and so use of these policies may lead to better employee attitudes.

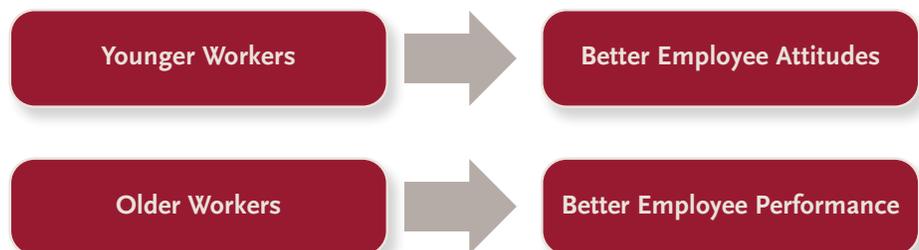
However, the freedom that comes along with flexibility does not necessarily translate into better job performance. For a worker to make TPM policies lead to better job performance, they need a well-developed knowledge both of their own abilities and of the job.

- Among older workers, the effect of use of these policies on employee attitudes is weaker among younger workers. The study's authors suggest that they do not have the same expectations as younger workers regarding TPM policies as an entitlement in a good job.

However, use of TPM policies was related to better job performance. Because they may face diminished physical capabilities, TPM can help them to work successfully.

Figure 2 outlines this relationship graphically. While TPM policies are good for both younger and older workers, they are good in different ways and for different outcomes.

Figure 2. Use of TPM Policies: Divergent Effects



Source: Based on Bal and de Lange, under review.

The Bottom Line

TPM policies may have more positive effects on job performance among older workers, but not among younger workers, because older workers use them to counteract declining health. They have positive effects for younger workers as well, but in the area of employee attitudes not job performance.

Box 1: How does TPM affect workers?

- **Workers react to their future needs, not just their current ones.**

When workers have access to TPM policies, they may plan to use those policies in the future.

- **When workers have access to TPM policies, they may see them as evidence that their employer cares about their well-being.**

This may lead to higher job satisfaction or organizational commitment.

- **TPM policies help workers to address their current needs and preferences.**

For instance, allowing people to occasionally change their starting and quitting times may lead to improved work-family balance for those with child care or elder care responsibilities.

- **In exchange for TPM policies, workers may be willing to go above and beyond.**

When employers allow workers to use TPM policies, workers may reciprocate through increased employee engagement or organizational commitment.

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