

Parents

With the emergence of the new workplace model, workplaces can become more family-friendly.

The family is at the core of society and thus it is natural for employees to feel anxious about the impact of any change in work schedules upon our family and parenting structures. There are of course many adjustments that can impact negatively on these structures. But if they are well managed and appropriate measures such as provision of infrastructures and services are taken, these constraints can be overcome in order to reap the benefits of the 24/7 economic model. What are the benefits of 24/7 for the family? Economic benefits

The 24/7 economic model has for overall objective to improve economic growth and development. Undoubtedly, such national economic benefits will also trickle down to employees in the form of better pay and work conditions. In turn, this will mean economic benefits for the family in terms of better pay, i.e. higher income for employees to spend for the family. This will lead to an increase in the standard of living of people by generating higher purchasing power and thus benefiting the economy as a whole. Also, through the 24/7, parents may be able to take up a second/part-time job to improve the family spending capacity. This is indeed a plus in a context of rising prices of essential items like food and diesel with people often facing difficulties to make both ends meet. Also, mothers and housewives would have the possibility to get back to work or even take part-time work or adopt job sharing. Their additional contribution to the domestic expenses would obviously improve their standard of living. Telecommuting would also allow more people to join the active population and contribute to the family budget to enhance their quality of life. Such practices will enable them to have a better work-family balance. Social benefits

The main gain for employees from flexible working arrangements is the increased opportunity to fit in other commitments and activities with work, and make better use of their free time. This can be particularly helpful for people caring for children or other dependants, but others may find flexible working helpful too. They may feel more in control of their workloads, and manage a better balance between life and work. Employees will avoid the stress of commuting at peak times if their start and finish times are staggered or if they work from home, and many employers find that introducing flexible working arrangements reduces demand for sickness leaves. If parents opt for work schedules that are adjusted to allow for more free time with their children, the quality of family life will surely benefit. The family bond will be tightened as there will be closer proximity with families. This would also lead to an improved quality of life and better work-life balance. Parents of young children can design their work schedules with their employers in such a way as to have reduced stress, better childcare arrangements, better domestic management or lower childcare costs. Parents whose adult children work may also naturally worry about the safety of the latter, especially those who adopt flexible work practices. They may worry about the facilities offered to their offspring, about transport, security and health issues. They should rest assured that these issues are being given due consideration. A number of workshops and seminars are scheduled to sensitise and enlist the support of all key stakeholders to make the 24/7 model become a reality, including national transport providers, law and order enforcing agencies, and employers for proper HR policy reviews. The idea is to encourage all infrastructure and service providers to cater for the needs of a 24/7 society in order to ensure a smooth transition, thereby addressing the perceived potential risks associated with extended working hours. To sum up, there are many possible advantages for individuals and parents working in this system namely:

- Increased freedom and convenience and thus better domestic management thanks to negotiated schedules;
 - More available time during the day for child care/elderly care;
 - Better childcare arrangements as more childcare facilities may become available within the 24/7 model;
 - Lower childcare costs if parents negotiate work schedules allowing them to take care of their children;
 - Possibility to take up a second/part-time job;
 - Lesser working hours (with shift systems, the need for overtime may decrease); and
 - More daylight hours for recreation.
- We believe that the constraints that may arise out of the 24 by 7 model can be overcome with well-planned infrastructures and services, with proper negotiation between employers and employees. This is why we have set up several think-tanks to identify the stumbling blocks and make concrete proposals to drive the initiative. For the benefit of ALL, including the family.