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Charting a Flexible Future: Staff Readiness and Acceptance of Outcome-Based Flexible Work Arrangements at a Higher Education Institution in Malaysia

邁向靈活工作的未來：馬來西亞某高等教育機構員工對成果導向彈性工作安排的準備度與接受度

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Abstract:

Beyond flexible work arrangement policy design, the implementation can be successful only when employees are ready to embrace them. Drawing on organisational readiness for change and acceptance-based perspectives, the impact of readiness on the implementation of the Outcome-Based Flexible Work Arrangements (OBFWA), also known as Amalan Kerja Anjal Berdasarkan Hasil (AKABAH) policy, is examined in this study, along with staff acceptance as a mediating mechanism. The academic staff of a private university in Malaysia served as the sample population from where data were collected using a quantitative research design. PLS-SEM was used for conducting data analysis. It is revealed that staff readiness significantly and positively influences staff acceptance and the implementation of the AKABAH policy. Further, staff acceptance also significantly predicts implementation effectiveness and mediates the relationship between staff readiness and AKABAH policy implementation. In contrast, technology readiness shows no direct and significant impact on staff acceptance or AKABAH policy implementation, nor does acceptance show any mediation

Keywords: Outcome-Based Flexible Work Arrangements, Staff Readiness, Technology Readiness, Staff Acceptance, Higher Education Institutions

關鍵詞：成果導向彈性工作安排，員工準備度，技術準備度，員工接受度，高等教育機構

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role in the link between technology readiness and implementation. The success of AKABAH, based on these findings, is primarily driven by human and psychological factors rather than technological capability alone. Technology readiness in AKABAH is a condition that equips staff with digital capability, and must be complemented by readiness in organisational processes, policy clarity, and managerial practices to influence overall acceptance and implementation success. By empirically distinguishing the roles of staff readiness and technology readiness in outcome-based policy contexts, this study enriches the literature on flexible work and organisational change. Practically, the results highlight the importance of fostering employee preparedness, trust, and acceptance to ensure the effective implementation of AKABAH policies in higher education institutions.

摘要：

除了彈性工作安排的政策設計外，政策能否成功實施也取決於員工是否準備好接受這些安排。本研究以組織變革準備度及接受度相關觀點為基礎，探討準備度對成果導向彈性工作安排（OBFWA），亦稱 Amalan Kerja Anjal Berdasarkan Hasil（AKABAH）政策實施的影響，並檢驗員工接受度的中介作用。研究採用量化研究設計，以馬來西亞某私立大學的學術人員為研究對象，並運用偏最小二乘結構方程模型（PLS-SEM）分析資料。結果顯示，員工準備度對員工接受度及 AKABAH 政策實施均具有顯著正向影響。員工接受度亦能顯著預測實施成效，並在員工準備度與政策實施之間發揮中介作用。相較之下，技術準備度對員工接受度或政策實施均無顯著直接影響，接受度亦未在技術準備度與政策實施之間發揮中介作用。這些結果表明，AKABAH 的成功主要由人的因素與心理因素驅動，而非僅由技術能力決定。技術準備度提供員工所需的數位能力，但須配合組織流程準備度、政策清晰度及管理實務，才能影響整體接受度與實施成效。本研究透過實證區分成果導向政策情境中員工準備度與技術準備度的作用，豐富彈性工作及組織變革文獻。在實務上，研究結果強調提升員工準備度、信任及接受度，對高等教育機構有效實施 AKABAH 政策的重要性。

1. Introduction

The work landscape in higher education institutions (HEIs) has undergone a profound transformation in recent years, driven by digitalisation, evolving workforce expectations, and COVID-19's disruptive effect (Atiku & Ganiyu, 2022). HEIs are increasingly required to balance institutional performance demands with academicians' needs for flexibility, autonomy, and work-life integration (Ghali-Zinoubi et al., 2024). In response, flexible work arrangements (FWAs) have emerged as a strategic human resource management practice, enabling organisations to redesign how, when, and where work is performed without compromising productivity or service quality. Within this broader discourse, AKABAH represents a progressive approach that shifts managerial emphasis from physical presence and fixed schedules to measurable outputs and performance outcomes.

In Malaysia, public and private universities have gradually introduced elements of flexible working, particularly during and after the pandemic. AKABAH aligns closely with the knowledge-intensive nature of academic and administrative work in universities, where performance is often assessed more by deliverables, output quality, and goal attainment than by time spent on campus (Asbari & Novitasari, 2024). For academic staff, outcomes may include teaching effectiveness, research productivity, publication outputs, and community engagement, while for administrative staff, they encompass service efficiency, responsiveness, and task completion. By focusing on outcomes, AKABAH has the potential to enhance academic autonomy, motivation, innovation, creativity, and job satisfaction (Asbari & Novitasari, 2024; Keo et al., 2025; Milon et al., 2024) while simultaneously supporting institutional effectiveness and sustainability (Singh, 2023). In Malaysia, studies suggested that AKABAH's practices can significantly improve performance and well-being (Firdausi & Indiyati, 2025; Johari et al., 2024).

In line with these developments, one of the HEIs in Selangor has introduced the outcome-based flexible

work arrangements (AKABAH) policy. However, the implementation of AKABAH has been uneven, often constrained by bureaucratic structures, traditional management mindsets, and concerns over accountability and performance monitoring (Hassan et al., 2022). Staff are expected to meet increasingly complex performance expectations amid growing teaching loads, administrative responsibilities, digital transformation initiatives, and stakeholder demands. Evidence suggests that the success of such initiatives is contingent not merely on policy design, but also critically on employees' readiness and acceptance (Mendoza, 2022). Work flexibility initiatives frequently underperform or fail when employees lack psychological readiness, digital competence, trust in management, or clarity of performance expectations required to operate effectively in outcome-based work environments (Chong et al., 2023). In the HEI environment, where work roles are complex and performance outputs are multifaceted, insufficient staff readiness may weaken the intended advantages of flexible work arrangements (Abdul Rahman et al., 2024).

Despite a growing global trend, the readiness of academic staff to transition to such arrangements, particularly within the specific operational and cultural context of HEIs, remains underexplored. Existing studies on AKABAH in Malaysian HEIs have largely focused on outcomes such as job satisfaction, innovation, or work-life balance (Abdul Rahman et al., 2024; Asbari & Novitasari, 2024), with limited attention given to implementation factors such as readiness and acceptance that condition these outcomes. The lack of systematic investigation into how staff readiness and acceptance shape the effectiveness of AKABAH is a crucial literature gap. To ensure that AKABAH's initiative is not only formally adopted but also meaningfully embraced by staff, there is an urgent need to address this weakness. Therefore, this study's aims are twofold: to examine the current level of readiness and acceptance amongst academic staff regarding the implementation of the AKABAH policy, and to examine whether acceptance mediates the policy's successful implementation. By providing empirical evidence on assessing AKABAH, this study provides valuable insights for private higher education institution administrators and policymakers to design targeted strategies, training programmes, and digital infrastructure enhancements to improve staff preparedness for flexible work arrangements, such as AKABAH. Further, this work enriches the currently limited understanding of flexible work practices in HEIs, providing groundwork for future studies and the development of policies in Malaysia.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Outcome-based Flexible Work Arrangements

Organisational practices that allow employees to choose when, where, and how they work are known as flexible work arrangements (FWAs) (Firdausi & Indiyati, 2025). Traditionally, FWAs have been operationalised through time-based or location-based flexibility, such as flexitime, compressed workweeks, telecommuting, and hybrid work. However, recent shifts in work design, which were accelerated by digitalisation and the COVID-19 pandemic, have prompted a move toward AKABAH, where employee performance is evaluated primarily on outputs, results, and goal attainment rather than physical presence or hours worked (Yeo, 2024). AKABAH draws conceptual roots from the results-only work environment (ROWE) and performance management literature, which emphasise autonomy, accountability, and trust (Mendoza et al., 2022). In AKABAH, employees are granted discretion over work processes provided that predefined outcomes are achieved. This model aligns well with knowledge-intensive and professional work contexts, including HEIs, where performance is inherently outcome-oriented (e.g., teaching quality, research outputs, service delivery). Recent studies suggest that outcome-based flexibility represents a more sustainable and mature form of FWAs, as it reduces presenteeism, enhances autonomy, and aligns employee contributions with organisational goals (Choudhury et al., 2023; Parker & Grote, 2022).

The AKABAH policy's successful implementation is predicted to be driven by three interrelated dimensions namely staff readiness, technology readiness, and staff acceptance. The Organisational Readiness for Change (ORC) Theory serves as the theoretical underpinning for examining the effect of readiness on policy implementation. Weiner's (2009) ORC theory posits that readiness is a shared psychological state in which organisational members feel committed to implementing a change and confident in their collective capabilities to do so. In the context of AKABAH, readiness encompasses the cognitive understanding of outcome expectations, emotional preparedness for autonomy in work design, and behavioural willingness to adopt self-directed performance norms. When staff appraise the AKABAH policy as valuable and believe they have the skills, resources, and organisational support to enact it, they are more likely to align their behaviours with the policy's requirements. This alignment increases the likelihood of successful implementation outcomes (Weiner, 2009). The conceptual link between readiness and acceptance of AKABAH implementation is illustrated in Figure 1, highlighting their interconnected roles in achieving successful policy adoption.

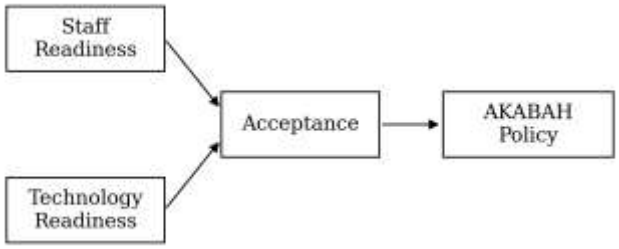


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

2.2. Staff Readiness for the Outcome-based Flexible Work Arrangements Policy Implementation

Staff readiness reflects employees' beliefs about the value of the change and their collective capability to implement it (Hasyim & Bakri, 2024). In the context of AKABAH, staff readiness encompasses the cognitive understanding of outcome expectations, emotional acceptance of autonomy-based work, and behavioural willingness to self-manage performance. Recent empirical studies indicate that when employees are psychologically ready for flexible, outcome-driven work, they demonstrate greater adaptability, proactive behaviour, and compliance with new performance frameworks (Rafferty et al., 2023; Talaja et al., 2023).

Prior studies of flexible working systems have found that staff readiness is strengthened when they perceive clear benefits and alignment with their professional goals, especially in contexts where transformational leadership or supportive culture exists (Setyoningtyas & Febriansyah, 2024). Research on Malaysian female employees' readiness for FWA found readiness to be significantly influenced by perceived benefits, company policies, and career advancement opportunities, such as factors that enhance employee confidence and willingness to adopt flexibility (Teoh et al., 2024). In HEIs, where roles are multifaceted and loosely structured, readiness is particularly important to ensure that flexibility does not result in role ambiguity or coordination breakdown. This study argues that staff tend to accept the AKABAH policy if they exhibit greater levels of readiness, as measured by attitude flexibility and faith in performance-based evaluations.

2.3. Technology Readiness for the Outcome-based Flexible Work Arrangements Policy Implementation

A person's likelihood of accepting and effectively using digital tools that support flexible work is called technology readiness (Hasyim & Bakri, 2024). While technology readiness is often assumed to be a prerequisite for flexible work, recent literature suggests that its role may be context-dependent. In digitally mature organisations, technology functions as a baseline enabler rather than a differentiating factor influencing acceptance or implementation (Choudhury et al., 2023). A previous study revealed that faculty readiness for alternative AKABAH was largely influenced by digital literacy and the availability of ICT resources (Mendoza, 2022). Staff who lacked technological competence expressed resistance, underlining the need for training and structured support. Romero-Hall and Ripine (2021) explored flexible instruction and found that many faculty members were underprepared to integrate learning technologies into their teaching practices. The findings point to gaps in professional development, as technology training had not kept pace with institutional expectations for hybrid instruction.

Integrative research shows that technology readiness enhances workers' adaptability and competence in using new technologies, which can support flexible work processes, particularly those that rely on decentralised coordination, digital interaction, and online performance monitoring (Kumi et al., 2024). Critically, however, technology readiness does not automatically produce technology acceptance. Khoza et al. (2024) studied the relationships among technology readiness, technology acceptance and work engagement in a cross-sectional quantitative study of 143 working adults. Based on the Technology Readiness and Acceptance Model (TRAM) and Job Demands-Resources Theory, they found that while technology readiness had a positive effect on work engagement, technology acceptance only partly mediated that relationship. Result showed a negative direct link with engagement when examined independently. This suggests that readiness and acceptance are distinct constructs that do not operate in a linear sequence, a distinction that matters when evaluating how staff respond to digitally supported FWA policies. Although technology readiness provides foundational capability for using digital tools, studies indicate that it may not directly drive acceptance or implementation of outcome-based work policies if the work design emphasises management practices, autonomy, and outcome clarity more than technological adoption (Tan & Doraisamy, 2025). Consequently, some studies report weak or non-significant relationships between technology readiness and broader policy acceptance when flexibility is framed around trust and outcomes rather than digital tools per se (Crooney et al., 2025).

2.4. Staff Acceptance of the Outcome-based Flexible Work Arrangements Policy Implementation

Staff acceptance refers to employees' positive attitudes, perceived usefulness, and willingness to adopt a policy in practice. In the context of this study, acceptance involves the degree to which staff are willing to adopt AKABAH as a permanent practice. Studies on AKABAH consistently show that acceptance is shaped by perceived trust, autonomy, fairness, and performance benefits (Gajendran et al.,

2024). AKABAH tends to generate higher acceptance as it signals managerial trust and reduced micromanagement, allowing employees to feel empowered and respected. Tirrel (2023) studied German SMEs and found that staff acceptance was highest when technology was integrated with leadership support and human resource practices. This illustrates that acceptance is not solely a technological issue but is rather shaped by the interplay among digital tools, managerial trust, and organisational commitment working together.

Further, staff acceptance of AKABAH practices extends beyond its first adoption. According to Vartiainen (2024), when expectations, performance evaluation, and well-being are clearly defined in hybrid work, acceptance increases. Morales (2025) emphasised that when companies personalise flexibility by acknowledging workers' desires for independence, community, and career advancement, acceptance is more likely to last. Kossek et al. (2023) supported this argument further by proposing that effective AKABAH policy implementation requires employees to perceive genuine boundary control, rather than nominal policy availability alone. Their review of 338 studies found that acceptance is contingent on whether implementation aligns with broader human resource system values and whether employees actually experience the control that policies promise. According to these results, acceptance necessitates more than just changing policies; it also needs to be ingrained in workplace norms and values. In addition, acceptance has been shown to translate readiness into actual behavioural engagement, making it a key mediator in AKABAH implementation research (Berber & Slavić, 2023).

Thus, the present study presents following hypotheses:

H_1. Staff readiness has a positive significant relationship with AKABAH policy implementation

H_2. Technology readiness has a positive significant relationship with AKABAH policy implementation

H_3. Staff readiness has a positive significant relationship with staff acceptance

H_4. Technology readiness has a positive significant relationship with staff acceptance

H_5. Staff acceptance has a positive significant relationship with AKABAH policy implementation

H_6. Staff acceptance mediates the relationship between staff readiness and AKABAH policy implementation

H_7. Staff acceptance mediates the relationship between technology readiness and AKABAH policy implementation

3. Research Methodology

A quantitative, deductive cross-sectional research design is employed in this study, whereby data were gathered at a single point in time. Data were collected from academicians at one of the private HEIs in Selangor; thus, the study's unit of analysis is the individual. To gather data on the proposed key constructs, a self-administered questionnaire was used.

A four-section questionnaire was prepared, which encompasses the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Section A collected information on the participants' gender, age, faculty, employment status, year of service, and number of IT resources. Section B documented the factors that contribute to the readiness of academicians towards AKABAHs, including 7 items of staff readiness and 7 items of technology readiness. Section C comprised 7 items regarding staff acceptance, while Section D comprised 10 items regarding AKABAH's implementation.

The constructs and their observable items are adapted from previous research studies for the development of proposed research framework (Figure 1). Initially, the present study identifies 31 research items for the questionnaire development and for performing pretest and pilot study on 30 respondents. Finally, 31 research items have been utilised for final data collection process (Table 1). The measurements of these items were obtained via the usage of five-point Likert scale. The respondents indicated their degree of agreement with the item statements using the scale, with (1) denoting strong disagreement and (5) indicating strong agreement.

Table 1. Measurement of the construct, items and sources

Constructs	Items	Source(s)
Technology Readiness	7	Goodhue & Thompson (1995); Compeau & Higgins (1995); Venkatesh et al. (2003)
Staff Readiness	7	Holt et al. (2007); Staples et al. (1999)
Staff Acceptance	7	Davis (1989); Kelliher & Anderson (2010)
AKABAH	10	Albion (2004); Poh et al (2022)

A pilot test of the questionnaire was carried out in August 2025 on a representative sample of 30 academician. The aim of this pilot test was to determine whether the scales were well constructed and to ensure that the targeted respondents understood each of the questions in the questionnaire perfectly. After this process, some typos were corrected and all questions were validated. Once the questionnaire had been refined, it was launched online. The questionnaire was distributed through the main social networks from September to October 2025.

The survey questionnaire was distributed via an online platform to 322 academicians. Initially, the questionnaire was emailed to all staff via the university registrar's office, and a memo was issued to all academicians to fill out the online questionnaire. The study managed to gather 246 responses to be analysed, contributing to a 76.4% response rate. An a

priori power analysis using G*Power, based on a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), a significance level of 0.05, and statistical power of 0.80, indicated a minimum required sample size of 77 observations. Therefore, the sample size of 246 (N = 246) was considered adequate for estimating the proposed PLS-SEM model and testing the hypothesised relationships.

The measurement and structural model assessments were performed using PLS-SEM via SmartPLS 4.0 software (Hair et al., 2020). Hair et al. (2019) stated that measurement model assessment covers tests on (i) reliability, (ii) convergence, and (iii) discriminant validity. Meanwhile, structural model assessment covers tests on collinearity, path coefficient, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and Stone Geisser predictive relevance (Q^2) (Ramayah et al., 2018). Specifically, a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples was conducted to assess the significance of the structural path coefficients and indirect effects.

4. Results and Discussion

The study managed to collect 246 valid responses to be analysed. The demographic profile in Table 2 reveals that female respondents make up the majority at 66.7%, and their male counterparts make up the remaining 33.3%. Respondents aged between 41 and 50 years old also make up the majority. Furthermore, 41.5% have served as an academician for 16 to 20 years, with the status of permanent employee (81.7%), indicating a relatively experienced workforce. The number of respondents across faculties was generally balanced. Finally, the majority of the respondents (38.2%) have been using more than five devices as their IT resources, such as smartphones, laptops, desktops, tablets, printers, Internet connection (wi-fi/broadband / mobile data), and cloud storage (Google Drive/One Drive/iCloud).

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of respondents (N=246)

Characteristics		Cases (%)
Gender	Male	82 (33.3)
	Female	164 (66.7)
Age Group	Less than 25 years	1 (0.4)
	25-30 years old	8 (3.3)
	31-40 years old	46 (18.7)
	41-50 years old	142 (57.7)
	51-60 years old	41 (16.7)
	Above 60 years old	8 (3.3)
Faculty/Centre	FBA	54 (22.0)
	FCVAC	54 (22.0)
	FESS	45 (18.3)
	FELS	59 (24.0)
	FHS	34 (13.8)
Employment Status	Permanent	201 (81.7)
	Contract	45 (18.3)
Year of Service	Less than 1 year	12 (4.9)
	1–5 years	36 (14.6)
	6-10 years	21 (8.5)
	11-15 years	42 (17.1)
	16-20 years	102 (41.5)
	More than 20 years	33 (13.4)
Number of IT Resources	1 device	19 (7.7)
	2–3 devices	93 (37.8)
	4–5 devices	40 (16.3)
	More than 5 devices	94 (38.2)

4.1. Level of Readiness for the Outcome-based Flexible Work Arrangements Policy Implementation

This section details the findings regarding the respondents' readiness for the implementation of the AKABAH policy. Panel A of Table 3 presents the one-sample t-test results for staff readiness. The test compares the observed mean with the neutral midpoint of the five-point Likert scale (test value = 3.00). The mean score for staff readiness was 4.7483, which is substantially higher than the neutral midpoint and statistically significant at the 1% level ($p < 0.01$). This high mean score provides strong empirical evidence that the staff are well-prepared, both psychologically and practically, to embrace this workplace transformation. High readiness is a fundamental predictor of successful change implementation because it reflects a collective belief that the change is worthwhile and that individuals possess the capability to execute it effectively (Yen et al., 2024). Specifically, Mamoso et al. (2022) emphasised that when employees value a change and appraise their resources, skills, and situational support favourably, they tend to actively and persistently engage with new working policies, resulting in positive implementation outcomes.

Furthermore, the results for readiness level are presented in Panel B of Table 3, grouped into two dimensions. The findings disclosed that the staff are slightly more technologically capable (mean = 4.7573) of implementing the AKABAH policy successfully, as compared to staff readiness (mean = 4.7393) itself. This indicates that the staff are not only receptive to new technologies but also confident in using them to support the AKABAH work model. Empirical research in organisational settings underscored that technology readiness is a crucial enabler of adaptive performance, particularly in digitally mediated work environments. Employees with high technology readiness tend to display better adaptability, problem-solving capacity, and digital tool usage proactiveness, all critical for effective flexible work implementation (Abdul Hamid, 2022). This is also consistent with the study by Salem (2025) which found that technology readiness among public sector workers contributed

positively to adapting behaviours, which are essential for sustained productivity in flexible work systems.

Table 3. Level of readiness for the implementation of the AKABAH policy (The authors)

Panel A: One-Sample T-Test				
	N	**Mean**	**t-statistic**	**p value**
Readiness	246	4.7483	209.987	.000***
Panel B: Mean Value of Each Readiness Dimension				
Readiness Dimensions		**Mean**		**Rank**
Staff Readiness		4.7393		1
Technology Readiness		4.7573		2

Note: Result displays significant difference at the *** 1 percent level and ** 5 percent level, each, using two-tailed tests.

Next, the staff readiness scores suggest that the staff not only understand the intentions behind the AKABAH policy, but also feel empowered and willing to align their work patterns accordingly. In line with Talaja et al.'s (2023) findings, employee readiness for organisational change is shown to significantly influence individuals' motivation, effort, cooperation, and persistence when facing new work practices. In the context of AKABAH, staff readiness encompasses cognitive preparedness (promises to provide quality work output), affective acceptance (positive attitudes toward top management's request), and behavioural intention (willingness to meet all work demands). Prior studies of flexible working systems have found that employee readiness is strengthened when staff perceive clear benefits and alignment with their professional goals, especially in contexts where transformational leadership or supportive culture exists (Setyoningtyas & Febriansyah, 2024).

4.2. Level of Acceptance for the Outcome-based Flexible Work Arrangements Policy Implementation

The findings on the level of acceptance of the AKABAH policy implementation are reported in this section. To determine if the mean value of the acceptance level is substantially equal to or different from neutral midpoint of the five-point Likert scale (test value = 3.00), a one-sample t-test was performed. Table 4 shows that the mean score for acceptance was 4.7387 and statistically significant at the 1% level ($p < 0.01$), reflecting strong staff endorsement of the AKABAH policy implementation within HEIs. Acceptance in organisational change literature is widely understood as positive employee attitudes and willingness to embrace new work practices, which are key precursors to successful work policy implementation and sustained behavioural change (Aydın Çivilidağ & Durmaz, 2024). High acceptance is thus an indicator that the staff sees AKABAH as meaningful, relevant, and supportive of their work needs.

Table 4. Level of acceptance of the implementation of the AKABAH policy (The authors)

Panel A: One-Sample T-Test				
	n	**Mean**	**t-statistic**	**p value**
Acceptance	246	4.7387	183.063	.000***

Note: Result displays significant difference at the *** 1 percent level and ** 5 percent level, each, using two-tailed tests.

The respondents expressed that the AKABAH policy implementation makes them feel more trusted by their employer. This is aligned with the finding by Aydın Çivilidağ and Durmaz (2024) that formal flexible work policies often strengthen perceived organisational support and trust. When policies emphasise outputs over time spent, staff would deem it as a show of confidence in their ability to manage work independently. This result also reflects broader empirical patterns whereby work arrangement flexibility fosters psychological empowerment, whereby employees feel respected and valued by the leadership, boosting acceptance of new work structures (Tan & Doraisamy, 2025) and enhancing intrinsic motivation. In addition, respondents claimed that the AKABAH policy would give them greater control over their work schedule. This is consistent with established evidence that scheduling autonomy is a central driver of employee acceptance of flexible work arrangement practices. Flexible scheduling allows employees to match work tasks with their optimal productivity periods, manage personal responsibilities, and reduce work and non-work conflicts (Crooney et al., 2025; Tan & Doraisamy, 2025). In the Malaysian context, autonomy in scheduling has been linked to improved work-life balance, further reinforcing why control over schedules promotes acceptance of policies like AKABAH.

4.3. PLS-SEM Results

The research model assessment and the PLS-SEM results' systematic evaluation were performed using Partial Least Squares (PLS) following Hair et al.'s (2019) suggestion. Memon et al. (2021) also recommended the usage of SEM for estimating certain models as it allows for hypotheses testing. Additionally, Ramayah et al. (2018) highlighted the ability of PLS-SEM to estimate and test latent construct interactions as a key feature that sets it apart from other analytical methods.

4.3.1. Assessment of Measurement Model

Hair et al. (2019) described PLS-SEM as a sequential two-step method. The initial phase focuses on the measurement model to establish parameter estimates, providing the necessary foundation to

subsequently compute the path coefficients within the structural model.

Table 5. Measurement model statistics (The authors)

Indicators & Items	Loading
Staff Readiness (AVE = 0.695, CR = 0.940, α = 0.925, VIF = 3.826)	
SR1	0.825
SR2	0.932
SR3	0.919
SR4	0.785
SR5	0.773
SR6	0.866
SR7	0.709
Technology Readiness (AVE = 0.622, CR = 0.920, α = 0.897, VIF = 1.667)	
TR1	0.757
TR2	0.853
TR3	0.841
TR4	0.865
TR5	0.752
TR6	0.752
TR7	0.783
Staff Acceptance (AVE = 0.731, CR = 0.950, α = 0.936, VIF = 3.394)	
SA1	0.889
SA2	0.785
SA3	0.755
SA4	0.955
SA5	0.936
SA6	0.936
SA7	0.791
AKABAH Implementation (AVE = 0.567, CR = 0.927, α = 0.912, VIF = 2.811)	
FW1	0.743
FW2	0.777
FW3	0.875
FW4	0.814
FW5	0.762
FW6	0.824
FW7	0.832
FW8	0.877
FW9	0.793
FW10	0.721

The measurement model's findings are displayed in Table 5, and the statistics must adhere to the five acceptable standards for the data to be considered reliable and valid. First, according to Ramayah et al. (2018), every factor loading should exceed 0.7. Secondly, each latent construct's average variance extracted (AVE) must exceed 0.5 (Hair et al., 2020). Thirdly, composite reliability (CR) must exceed 0.7 (Ramayah et al., 2018). Based on Table 5, each item's CR and factor loadings have exceeded 0.7. The AKABAH policy implementation construct shows the lowest AVE value at 0.567, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.7. These results confirm the validity, reliability, and internal consistency of all the items. Fourthly, there is a need to examine the variance inflation factors (VIF) statistics to identify multicollinearity issues between the independent variables. Hair et al.'s (2020) rule of thumb is that the VIF values should be below 5. Based on Table 5, all the VIF values are less than 5.

Lastly, according to Hair et al. (2019), the goal of the discriminant validity evaluation is to attest that a reflective concept has the strongest correlations with its indicators in the PLS path model. The Fornell-Larcker criteria have long been used to evaluate discriminant validity. In testing for discriminant validity, comparing the square root of the AVE of each construct with its connection with other constructs is equivalent to comparing the AVE with the constructs' squared correlations (Hair et al., 2020). The AVE square roots of the reflecting constructs are all higher than their correlations with the route model's other latent variables (see Table 6). Discriminant validity is confirmed for the constructs based on these results.

Table 6. Fornell-larcker criterion discriminant test results (The authors)

	AKABAH	SA	SR	TR
AKABAH	0.753			
SA	0.710	0.855		
SR	0.699	0.776	0.833	
TR	0.581	0.658	0.649	0.788

Note: The diagonal (bold) value is the AVE square root of each latent variable, and the element off-diagonal value is the intercorrelation value between the latent variables.

AKABAH denotes Amalan Kerja Anjal Berdasarkan Hasil; SA denotes Staff Acceptance; SR denotes Staff Readiness; TR denotes Technology Readiness

Ramayah et al. (2018) recommended the use of the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) approach to assess discriminant validity, which reveals the correlations of indicators across latent constructs. Ringle et al. (2023) recommended HTMT of 0.90 as the threshold value. Thus, if the HTMT value is less than 0.90, then the discriminant validity between two constructs is established, whereas if the HTMT value is greater than this threshold, discriminant validity does not exist. In this study, a cutoff value of 0.90 recommended by Ringle et al. (2023) was used and the result of HTMT is tabulated in Table 7. The results reveal that the HTMT value for all the constructs are below 0.90, indicating adequate discriminant validity, meaning that the constructs are empirically distinct from one another. This suggests that there is no critical issue of multicollinearity or construct overlap within the measurement model.

Table 7. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) discriminant test results (The authors)

	AKABAH	SA	SR	TR
AKABAH				
SA	0.739			
SR	0.662	0.792		
TR	0.608	0.655	0.704	

Note: Values represent the heterotrait–monotrait ratios between constructs.

AKABAH denotes Amalan Kerja Anjal Berdasarkan Hasil; SA denotes Staff Acceptance; SR denotes Staff Readiness; TR denotes Technology Readiness

4.3.2. Assessment of Structural Model

Figure 2 presents the structural model assessment results. In assessing predictive power, it was found that approximately 50.3% of the variation in AKABAH policy implementation can be explained by the three model constructs. Significant, moderate, or weak business concerns are indicated by R2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25, respectively (Hair et al., 2020). Hence, the finding confirms the structural model's moderate predictive power.

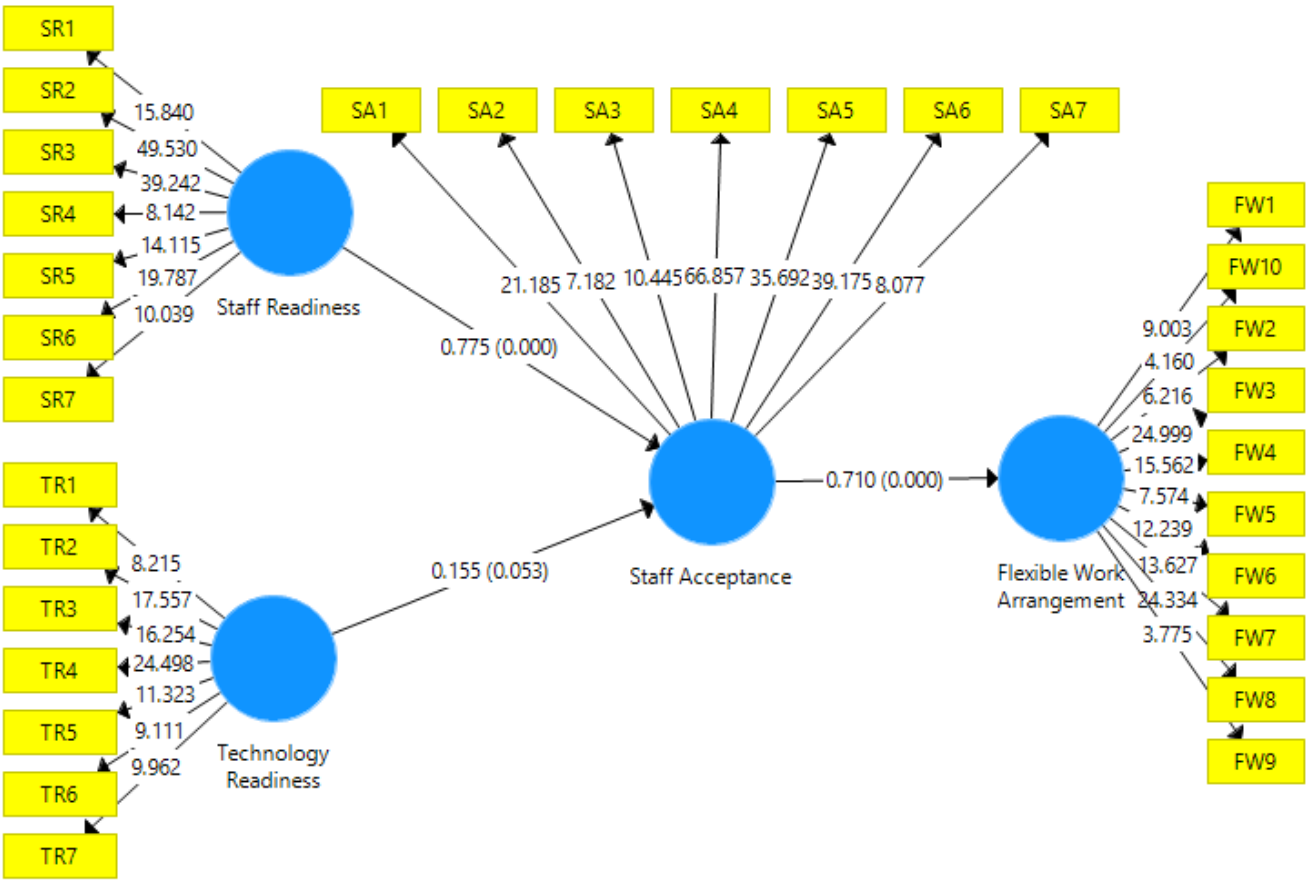


Figure 2. Research model specification (The authors)

Q^2 is a metric for determining the predictive relevance of the inner model and how well the model estimates missing data (Hair et al., 2020). To obtain the Q^2 value, the blindfolding technique is used, which is only applied to latent constructs with a reflective measurement model specification. As a general rule, the Q^2 value must be greater than zero ($Q^2 > 0$), indicating that the model is predictive for a specific endogenous construct (Hair et al., 2020). Positive Q^2 values confirm the model's predictive relevance of a specific construct, and the higher the Q^2 value, the better the tested model's predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2020). Table 8 reveals that the Q^2 values for staff acceptance and AKABAH policy implementation are greater than zero, indicating that all constructs provide unequivocal support for the model's predictive relevance for the endogenous constructs.

Table 8. The Predictive Relevance (Q^2) results (The authors)

	Q^2 (= 1-SSE/SSO)
Staff Acceptance	0.228 > 0
AKABAH Policy	0.362 > 0

Table 9 displays the effect size (f^2) which quantifies the influence of the predictor construct on the endogenous construct. Ramayah et al.'s (2018) rule of thumb is that small, medium, and large effect sizes are indicated by f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, respectively. A significantly large impact is exerted by the staff acceptance construct on outcome-based flexible work arrangements implementation (f^2 = 0.814).

On the other hand, the impact of staff readiness on staff acceptance and outcome-based flexible work arrangements implementation is moderate.

Table 9 also presents the structural model's findings. AKABAH policy implementation by HEIs is found to be significantly and positively associated with staff readiness (β = 0.287, t-stat = 3.176, p-value <.001***) and staff acceptance (β = 0.710, t-stat = 11.248, p-value <.001***). These findings give support to H_1 and H_5. In addition, staff readiness shows a significant structural relationship (β = 0.776, t-stat = 9.584, p-value <.001***) with staff acceptance, which leads to the acceptance of H_3.

Table 9. Path coefficients of the structural model (The authors)

H	Path Estimates	β	t-stat	p-value	f^2
H_1	Staff Readiness → AKABAH	0.287	3.176	0.000***	0.233
H_2	Technology Readiness → AKABAH	0.178	1.215	0.224^{NS}	0.018
H_3	Staff Readiness → Staff Acceptance	0.776	9.584	0.000***	0.162
H_4	Technology Readiness → Staff Acceptance	0.152	1.911	0.056^{NS}	0.029
H_5	Staff Acceptance → AKABAH	0.710	11.248	0.000***	0.814
H_6	Staff Readiness → Staff Acceptance → AKABAH	0.550	6.468	0.000***	0.057
H_7	Tech. Readiness → Staff Acceptance → AKABAH	0.162	1.223	0.221^{NS}	0.013

Note: NS = Not Significant; β = Standardized Beta Coefficient; f^2 = Effect Size

Contrary, technology readiness does not significantly predict both AKABAH policy implementation (β = 0.178, t-stat = 1.215, p-value >.05^{NS}) and staff acceptance (β = 0.152, t-stat = 1.911, p-value >.05^{NS}). Therefore, neither H_2 nor H_4 is supported.

Further, the path coefficients finding indicates that staff acceptance partially mediates the relationship between staff readiness (β = 0.550, t-stat = 6.468, p-value <.001***) and AKABAH policy implementation. This finding gives support to H_6. Staff acceptance, meanwhile, shows a non-significant indirect effect on the technology readiness (β = 0.162, t-stat = 1.223, p-value >.05^{NS}) and AKABAH policy implementation relationship. Non-mediation is concluded considering the insignificant direct and indirect effects. H_7 is therefore rejected.

5. Conclusion

This study aims to generate valuable insights regarding the AKABAH policy implementation in HEIs, specifically the readiness and acceptance of academic staff. Overall, the results reveal that staff acceptance serves as a cognitive-behavioural bridge between staff readiness and the implementation of the AKABAH policy. This indicates that staff readiness not only equips staff with the skills to implement flexible work arrangements, but also nurtures favourable perceptions and openness toward it, which enhances acceptance. Theoretically, readiness prepares staff cognitively and affectively for change, but acceptance transforms readiness into actionable engagement with the AKABAH policy implementation. Thus, staff readiness sets the stage while acceptance activates the process of actual implementation. This is in tandem with the assertion of Zona et al. (2025) that readiness fosters perceived self-efficacy and positive attitudes, which in turn contribute to greater acceptance of new work practices.

In contrast, staff acceptance did not mediate the link between technology readiness and AKABAH policy implementation. This is because technology readiness did not significantly predict acceptance in the first place. This indicates that technology readiness alone is insufficient when the implementation context is not primarily technology-dependent since the implementation of the AKABAH policy involves broader organisational, social, and managerial dimensions beyond mere technical capability (Khoza et al., 2024). Thus, even if the staff are comfortable with technology, that readiness does not automatically translate into acceptance of the AKABAH policy implementation unless organisational processes, norms, and supports are aligned to leverage those technologies in practice. This finding resonates with the research by Kampa (2023), indicating that when technology is only a peripheral element (rather than central) to a policy, readiness does not create a strong attitudinal or behavioural cascade.

This study is significant for improving current understanding on flexible work arrangements, particularly within the HEI context. It extends the Organisational Readiness for Change Theory (Weiner, 2009) by empirically demonstrating that staff readiness is a stronger determinant of AKABAH's implementation than technology readiness. Weiner's theory defines organisational readiness as members' psychological and behavioural preparedness to implement change and distinguishes between two sides which are change commitment and change efficacy. The current findings operationalise this distinction within the FWAs context by indicating that psychological preparedness drives implementation when flexibility is framed around outcomes rather than tools. This support findings by Caci et al. (2025) established in a systematic review of healthcare implementation literature that showed organisational readiness for change is frequently cited as a core between intent and actual engagement, yet its influence is context-specific and depends on how

alignment between readiness, acceptance, and implementation conditions is achieved. While prior studies often assume that digital readiness is a critical enabler of flexible work, the results of this current study suggest that psychological and behavioural preparedness play a more decisive role when flexibility is framed in terms of outcomes rather than technology use. Next, this study advances the understanding of acceptance as a central explanatory mechanism in AKABAH's implementation. Hence, this study validates the change adoption and behavioural acceptance literature by showing that readiness alone is insufficient unless it translates into positive staff attitudes and willingness to embrace the policy. This nuanced insight addresses a gap in existing AKABAH studies that frequently examine readiness or outcomes in isolation, without modelling acceptance as an intervening construct.

Practically, evidence-based guidance is provided by the findings for HEI management and policymakers implementing AKABAHs. The strong influence of staff readiness and acceptance underscores the importance of change management strategies that prioritise communication, trust-building, clarity of expectations, and employee involvement rather than relying solely on technological infrastructure. Organisations where employee involvement is embedded in change planning show faster adoption and lower resistance, because co-creation of the change process signals legitimacy and shared ownership (Suratmoko & Adnan, 2024). At the policy level, this study provides empirical support for national and institutional flexible work agendas by demonstrating that employee acceptance is a critical success condition for outcome-based flexibility. Policymakers should therefore incorporate readiness and acceptance assessments into the design and rollout of flexible work policies. Formal guidelines, performance indicators, and evaluation mechanisms should explicitly recognise outcome-based work principles while allowing flexibility in execution based on staff preparedness.

6. Limitations and Further Study

Notwithstanding all the above, this study also has its fair share of noteworthy limitations. First, it focused on the readiness and acceptance of AKABAHs. Future research could expand the model by incorporating leadership style, organisational culture, and perceived organisational support as moderators or antecedents of staff readiness and acceptance. This would provide greater insights regarding the contextual drivers of outcome-based flexibility. Secondly, the generalisability of the findings is limited as the data were gathered from only one private HEI. Future comparative studies across multiple private and public HEIs would better account for varied institutional contexts. Furthermore, this study focused exclusively on academic staff; hence, including non-academic personnel in future work would provide a more holistic view of organisational readiness for AKABAHs. Finally, while the sample size of 246 respondents is significant, a larger and more diverse sample size would strengthen the reliability of the results and provide deeper insights into patterns of readiness across diverse academic contexts.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, N.M.M.M and N.M.; methodology, N.A.; data analysis, R.M.; writing—original draft preparation, N.A., N.M., and R.M.; writing—review and editing, N.A.J.; visualization, N.M.M.M.; supervision, N.A.J.; project administration, N.M.M.M.; funding acquisition, N.M.M.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Informed Consent Statement

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the intended use of the information provided. Participation was voluntary, and all data were anonymized during analysis and reporting to protect participant confidentiality.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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