

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

People have to work to support their lives and families. Some have their own business and some work for others. According to a report by the National Statistical Office of Thailand in 2005, 36 percent of the Thai labour force are employed. That means more than one third of Thai people have to go to work at least five days per week. Since they have to take responsibility for their family and themselves at the same time, they have to balance life and work. Therefore, the most important thing is time management. 8 AM to 5 PM is the traditional working time in Thailand, and it is school time for children also. There are many families which have to hire nannies to take care of their children when they are at the workplace. Parents don't have enough time for children even during holidays, which may lead to social issues. Apart from the children, some families have members with disabilities or elders to take care of.

Nowadays in a big city like Bangkok, the main problem is traffic congestion, especially in the morning between 8 AM to 9 AM and in the evening between 6 PM to 7 PM. Even high technology transportation—BTS is also congested during rush hours. This problem is caused by the number of people who have to travel between home and their workplace at the same time. If people did not start and finish work at the same time, traffic congestion wouldn't exist. Thus, Flexible Working Hours or Flextime is one idea to solve this problem.

Wade (1973) states that Flexible Working Hours were introduced in 1967 at the company headquarters at Ottobrunn on the outskirts of Munich by Messerschmit-Bolko-Blohm. Presently, Flextime is quite widely accepted in Europe and America. In an annual survey of human resource professionals conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, 58 percent responded that their organizations were now offering Flextime. However, in Thailand there are few companies implementing the Flexible Working Hours in their system.

An employee who works in Bangkok, has chosen a Flextime program for one year said that even though she is still single, Flextime makes her life more balanced, especially her traveling between home and workplace. Before Flextime

implementation she had to face congestion on the BTS every morning and she frequently got to work late. However, her life now has been changed, she gets to work on time and conveniently. There is only one thing that she did not agree with Flextime--it is hard to verify each individual employee's starting and finishing work because there are many choices of Flextime in her company.

Flexible Working Hours or Flextime is a variable work schedule, in contrast to traditional work arrangements requiring employees to work a standard 8AM to 5PM (Thai traditional working time). Flextime should consist of a "core time" period of the day when employees are expected to be at work (for example, between 10 am and 4pm), while the rest of time employees can vary it.

Employees can arrange their Flextime individually whereby they have to work during core times but have flexibility to vary their starting and finishing times. Moreover, the employees can balance their lives between work and family. The benefit should be the effect on employees' performances at their work place. One of the supervisors in a manufacturing compass in Nakornrachasima province supports this idea by changing his working time from 8 PM to 5 PM to be 9PM to 6 PM. His main objective is to take his daughter to school in the morning; he can save the money for school bus and delay the time that he has to wake up in the early morning by at least 1 hour. So, he comes to work more fresh and he also feels that he can work more efficiently. However, another supervisor who works at the same place said that she disagrees with Flextime because when she wants to communicate urgently with her colleagues who use the Flextime program, she cannot reach them due to their starting and finishing times being different. The telephone cannot solve this problem completely; some issues need "face to face" communication.

Therefore, this research is conducted to study employees' attitudes towards Flexible Working Hours, which will be a useful guide for any companies where would like to implement a Flexible Working Hours system.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.2.1 Main Problem

1.2.1.1 What is the employees' attitude towards Flexible Working Hours?

1.2.2 Sub-Problem

1.2.2.1 What is an ideal Flexible Working Hours program?

1.2.2.2 Does residence different in areas influence attitudes towards flexible working hours?

1.2.2.3 Does one's working group influence selection of Flextime?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 Main Objectives

To find employees' attitudes towards Flexible Working Hours.

1.3.2 Sub-Objectives

1. To find the ideal Flexible Working Hours.
2. To examine the factors which have a correlation with Flexible Working Hours selection such area of residence and working group.

1.4 DEFINITION OF TERM

Definitions of terms of this study are as follows:

1.4.1 Attitude: the degree of acceptance or rejection by employees of Flexible Working Hours, measured by rating scales.

1.4.2 Resident Area: The current location of respondent's home which is separated into five zones as follows:

1.4.2.1 Eastern Bangkok (consists of Klongtoey, Bangna, Prakhanong, Ladkrabang, Wattana, Praves, Sapansung, Bangkapi, Wangthonglang, Huaykhwang, Dindang, Rajathevi and Pathumwan)

1.4.2.2 Northern Bangkok (consists of Jatuchak, Bangsue, Dusit, Donmung, Saimai, Meanburi, Nongjork, Klongsamwa, Kannayaow, Bungkum, Ladprow, Laksi and Payathai)

1.4.2.3 Western Bangkok (consists of Klongsarn, Jomthong, Bangborn, Bangkhuntien, Thonburi, Ratburana, Thungkru, Yannawa, Sathorn, Bangrak and Bangkorlam)

1.4.2.4 Southern Bangkok (consists of Bangkoknoi, Bangkokyai, Bangplad, Bangkae, Pasicharoen, Thaweewattana, Talingchan, Nongkham, Pranakorn, Pomprab and Sampanthawong)

1.4.2.5 Perimeter (consists of Nonthaburi, Nakornpathom, Pathumthani and Samutprakarn)

1.4.3 Working Group: The current section in which employees work.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study of employees' attitudes is limited to members of the FAST Group (Finance and Accounting Team) of Central Retail Corporation which offers Flexible Working Hours in two programs—08:30-06:00 PM and 09:00-16:30 PM.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Nowadays there are some companies in Thailand that implement Flexible Working Hours in their organizations, because management have considered that Flextime can help employees to balance their lives between workplaces and homes. However, employees may agree or disagree with this program. Therefore this study can point out the attitudes of employees towards Flextime and present the ideal Flextime. It will be useful for many companies that would like to implement Flexible Working Hours in their system.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study of “Attitudes of Employees towards Flexible Working Hours: A case study at FAST group of Central Retail Corporation” is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the general background, the statement of the problem and scope of the study. The second chapter presents a review of related literature and the concepts of Flexible working Hours, satisfaction and attitudes. Chapter Three covers the methodology of the study with details of subjects, materials and procedures of data analysis. The fourth chapter will present the results and data

analysis from the questionnaires. The last chapter summarizes the results and provides discussion for further research.