

IMPACT OF FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENT ON EMPLOYEES PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Flexible work arrangement has been developed to minimize work pressure, health hazards and improve productivity. The study examined the relationship between flexible work arrangement and employees performance with emphasis on public schools in Lagos State. Daily commuting by workers in public schools in Lagos State could expose them to high risk of health hazards due to fixed term employment. Furthermore, increase in commuting raises the level of road congestions, high cost of transport, maintenance of vehicles, traffic and road facilities with exhaustion and stress as negative impacts on commuters. Questionnaire were designed to assess the views of respondents and potency of flexible work arrangement in the state. The study adopted a survey research and CMS Grammar School as a case study. Based on random sampling method, a total of 160 employees were selected as sample size drawn from a population size of 400 workers. Analysis was conducted with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Pearson correlation coefficient as test statistics. The hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between flexible work arrangement and employees' performance was formulated to determine the statistical significance of the study. The study found out that there was a significant relationship between flexible work arrangement and employees' performance thus the null hypothesis was rejected. The study is used to explain the negative impact of road congestion, hazardous emissions and delays on workers' health and employees' productivity in organisations in Lagos State.

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KEYWORDS: Employee Performance, Flexible Work Arrangement, Health Hazards, Organisational Productivity, Road Congestion

INTRODUCTION

It is now time to consider the appropriateness of flexible work arrangement and how it has influenced work schedules and productivity in many business organisations globally. How business organisations globally view flexible work arrangement depends extensively on its relevance to labour efficiency and diligence, ability to promote effective completion, social and economic mobility and individual enterprise, permit greater equality of opportunities, make possible higher productivity, raise the levels of living and promote development. The essence of flexible working arrangement is located in its influence on the individuals to alter their starting and ending times of work on a daily basis so as to bring a balance or integrate their work and family responsibilities (Golden, Veiga, & Simsek, 2006). Flexible working arrangement provides a grand strategy that aims at creating good and stable health status, a progressive return to effective work life balance, harmonization of earnings opportunities, lessening of family life imbalance and effective cornering of relevant excess work energy for organisational productivity (Mungania, Waiganjo, & Kihoro, 2016).

In this manner flexible work arrangements are found within the ambit of improved institutions and

attitudes (Todare, 2000). When flexible working schedule becomes functional in an organisation it affords the employees the opportunities to perform more than one function or task or being able to do jobs other than the one they do on a regular basis (O'Reilly, 1992). Flexible working arrangement consists of flexi time, home working, part-time working, compressed working weeks, annualized works, job sharing and term-time only working. It can also operate in the form of temporary agency workers, contract-firm employees, direct temporary hires and on-call workers (OECD, 1993; OECD, 1996).

In its widest form flexible working refers to special leave schemes that provide employees with the freedom to respond to a domestic crisis or to take a career break without jeopardizing their employment status (Armstrong, 2006). This view, of course, is based on the assumption that flexible working arrangement confers mutual benefits to both the employer and employees otherwise the approach will lack continuity. This argument has some merits and future experience will undoubtedly bring new developments to this area. These will include not only modifications but categorization. For this reason, flexible working has been divided into

internal and external flexibility for the essence of boosting organisational productivity.

In the words of Mueller (1996) internal flexibility strategies include use of alternative work scheduling, functional flexibility and multi-skilling while external flexibility includes use of part-time staff, temporary and fixed term contracts. There may be large instances where functional flexibility may involve employees taking on a small number of additional tasks closely related to their main role or alternatively may involve employees in practicing a wide range of diverse skills (Kelliher & Desomber, 2005). These instances may prevail when organisations are confronted largely with productivity challenges, and redefinition of its employee's engagement terms is aimed at improving its acceptability and usefulness. But, what about the condition where the organisation is unable to make a clear choice, that is, where there is the inclination for using flexible working where the cost is least or the benefits are largest. In such a condition, the organisations should weigh the options as they become relevant to it. The employees who are inclined to accept the choice confronted with this proposition will have to evaluate the benefits or otherwise of the flexible and fixed work arrangement, internal or external flexible working arrangement. They may not differ in their choices depending upon the prospective timing of the work schedules available to them and income flows which in turn will depend upon their stage in life, health status, working conditions and work life balance. Reasoning along these lines, most employees will prefer flexible working arrangements that satisfy their organisational needs.

There seems little doubt that organisations in Lagos State would adopt flexible working arrangement because there is good justification on the basis of high road congestion, population explosion, high hazardous emissions, high costs of commuting and delays. As Obisi (2015) observed, the world of management always changes and a choice has to be made between the best of both the old and new ways of organizing and managing resources both animate and inanimate. It is therefore necessary to tap the experience, knowledge and skill of the personnel in a manner that will be favourable to both groups.

Evaluations of the impact of flexible working arrangement must, however, be made in a broader framework involving the employees of public schools in Lagos State who on a daily basis are often times trapped in road congestion. This rationale does, however, raise the question of whether these groups of workers should be allowed to continue on a fixed term working conditions with its attendant negative impacts or be converted to flexible working staff that has the potential of guaranteeing employees well being, performance and organisational productivity.

Statement of the Problem

While postulating a flexible work arrangement, it is clear that the intent could not have been to implement a better and acceptable working arrangement for employers and employees only but also to complement government efforts in sustaining infrastructures and the economy. A managed flexible work arrangement is a natural component of a strategy of redesigning the employee engagement terms. It seeks to integrate the local work conditions in a given area into the world labour market mechanism in order to exploit the benefits offered by various forms of work schedules.

Fixed term work conditions cannot however be simply accepted as a favourable policy of managing effective human asset investment in an organisation. The obvious choice which is particularly appealing to those who want to hedge their bets as to whether the fixed term job is the best is to evaluate the growth that is generated by flexible work arrangements and have it compared with fixed jobs. The objective of flexible work schedule is aimed at providing greater operational flexibility, improve the use of employees' skills and capacities, increase productivity and reduce employment costs (Armstrong, 2013). There remains, however, the possibility of opinions that the usefulness of flexible work schedule is not restricted only to workplace activities but also to general economic capacity of the state.

An excessively complex impact of flexible work arrangement is its potential to free workers who experience on a daily basis exhaustion, burnout, frustration, employee strains, inability to sleep adequately at night, feeling of anger, helplessness, irritability, anxiety, dizziness, emotionally exhausted and high cost of transportation due to prolonged staying on the road and feeling of a lack of control over one's life (Benton, Hajdukowski-Ahmed, O'Conner & Zeytinoglu, 1999). It follows from these views that the applicability of flexible work or fixed term work will be evaluated in terms of the resulting burden and benefits among employees especially those in public schools in Lagos State.

Research Questions

The following questions have been designed for this study.

- i. How has the inclusion of flexible work arrangement in the work schedules been able to improve employees' performance in public schools in Lagos State?
- ii. How do employees perceive the introduction of flexible work arrangement as a panacea against road congestion in Lagos State?
- iii. Would the introduction of flexible work schedules mitigate total operational costs of organisations in the state?

- iv. How would the introduction of flexible work schedules affect the level of daily commuting in Lagos State?

Objectives of the Study

It is the objectives of this study to:

- i. analysis the impact of flexible work schedules on employees' performance in public schools in Lagos State.
- ii. examine the impact of flexible work arrangement on road congestion in Lagos State.
- iii. assess the relationship between flexible work schedule and operating costs of public schools in Lagos State.
- iv. Analyze the relationship between the flexible work arrangement and daily commuting in Lagos State.

Hypotheses Formulation

The following hypotheses have been formulated for this study.

- H₀:** There is no significant relationship between employees' performance and flexible work arrangement in public schools in Lagos State.
- H₀:** There is no significant relationship between the traffic congestion and flexible work arrangement in the state.
- H₀:** Total operational costs of the public schools will not be affected by the introduction of flexible work schedule in the schools.
- H₀:** The level of daily commuting on roads in Lagos State will not be affected by the introduction of flexible work schedules.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The nature and kind of work available to members of the society is an indication of the socio-economic and political arrangement of the society (Okafor, 2012). Due to this perception organisations in different economies make use of different work arrangements to maximize profits or minimize costs. The foregoing view suggests that organisations have options for work schedules that are mutually beneficial both to the workers and their firms. There have been instances of work arrangements that are not favourable to workers.

The views expounded by Okougbo (2007); Mokwenye (2008); Okafor (2010) attest the fact that dehumanization of Nigerian workers has continued unabated in clear violation of extant labour laws, constitution and ILO conventions. From this expression, workers in Nigeria are experiencing ill treatments and ugly working conditions. To challenge this situation, there may be, however, a better work schedules. Assuming the incentive from the alternative work schedule is better, the question remains why not this pattern be allowed to operate.

The answer is positive. Thus the introduction of flexible work arrangement. Many organisations have encouraged the growth of flexible work staff in their work places to resolve the phenomenon of work-family conflict and also to improve their performance (Baltes, 1999).

Many explanations have been put forward to describe flexible work arrangement but the one expounded by Armstrong (2013) tend to present a clearer perspective. According to him flexible work arrangement includes flexi time, home working, part-time working, compressed working weeks, annualized hours, job sharing and term-time only working. This includes special leave schemes that provide employees with the freedom to respond to a domestic crisis or to take a career break without jeopardizing their employment status.

Benefits of Flexible Work Arrangement

The benefits of flexible work arrangement may be stated without too much difficulty. Glass and Finley (2002) revealed that flexible work arrangement has positive effects on organisational commitment, retention and job satisfaction. Policies that favour flexible work schedule tend to slow down employee strains and work-family conflict and in all ramifications have significance effects on the employee's performance. But though, the actual benefits are yet to be made popular among workers, it remains crucial that the specific benefits in the definition be wholesomely manifested as they may arise in practice so that its evaluation is meaningful and consistent with the purpose. This may be the perception of Armstrong (2009). He depicted that flexible work arrangement entails a radical look and reexamination of the traditional employment patterns which bring about greater operational flexibility to improve human resource utilization, enhance skills, minimize cost and increase productivity. Probably another reason may be that it has the potential to reduce tension at work, enhance motivation and increase performance and sustainability. Substantially, differences exist in the nature of the benefits and in most cases, result in the management of labour and utilizing labour more efficiently by means of matching the supply of labour more closely (Kelliher & Desombre, 2005 citing Corder, 1989; Turner, 1999).

A report released by members of world at work and AWLP (2005) on flexible work schedule indicated that 73 percent of the respondents agreed that flexible work schedule improves the quality of life for the employees as well as for their families. Only 6 percent disagreed and 21 percent remained indifferent. The implication is two folds one: flexible work schedule is becoming popular globally and secondly it is a strong factor in maintaining the health value of the employees and the unity of the family.

Implications of Fixed-Term work schedules

There may have been reasons why employees or even employers opt for flexible work schedules. Preferences cause the choice of employment relationships to differ. Those employees who prefer fixed term are found with the desire of decent work. According to ILO (2005) report, decent work involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity for all women and men.

As may be seen from this elucidation decent work can be summarized to include family stability, public health and well-being among others (Okafor, 2012). However, promoting decent work at times may have its own limitations. In congested socio-economic environment decent work as typified by fixed-term work arrangement may not carry so much benefits especially in the areas of family stability, well being, social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, absence of discrimination or gender abuse, an income enabling employees to satisfy basic economic, social and family needs and responsibilities. The reason is that workers commute from home to work every day thereby heightening the rate of stress because of over staying on the road caused by traffic congestion. The possible physical manifestations of stress include arthritis, heart disease, migraines, headaches and muscle-skeletal disorders (Walters & Benton, 1997). This form of stress can cause employment strains (Lewchuk, De Wolff, King & Polanyi, 2003) and these can compel an employee to give up his or her job prematurely, a condition that can create family conflict where the impact is shifting more on the inability to satisfy household needs.

In Nigeria and especially Lagos State characterized with large traffic congestions, long delays on the road, high rate of hazardous emissions, high government expenditure on road maintenance and traffic control facilities, a resort to alternative work schedule such as flexible work schedule can be meaningful in reducing stress, burn outs, health hazards, over stretching of infrastructures and reduction in work-life imbalance.

Flexible work arrangement for organisations in Lagos

A good case can be made for introducing flexible work arrangement for organisations in Lagos. Such reason is due to the impact of high level of road congestion in the state. Nothing is gained if substantial working hours are spent on the road or total human capacity value is wasted on the road due to the fact that everybody must be at the work place

at the same time and leave at the same time. An article by Obisi & Ashionye (n.d) observed that in average a worker in Lagos State spends 8 hours in a day to the workplace, 40 hours in a week, 160 hours in a month and 1920 hours in a year which translates to one and half days on the road in a week, six and half days on the road in a month and eighty days on the road in a year. This is so enormous to stifle human capacity and stagnate productivity in an organisation. Therefore prescribing flexible work schedule is not prejudicial but a viable option to overcome the menace of traffic congestion.

Traffic congestion in the state became more critical recently due to high population growth, rate of urbanization coupled with large size of working class persons. The consequences also affect the government resources especially where maintenance of roads and traffic is concerned. Unfortunately, population and traffic congestions cannot be made to rise without being trailed by crimes and infrastructure dilapidations. To avoid these problems, the organisations in the state are at liberty to avail themselves of the opportunities provided by flexible work arrangement. Rau & Hyland (2002) revealed in their research that organisations which are offering flexible scheduling are more attractive to the people as compared to other organisations which are not offering any kind of flexible scheduling to their employees. The implication of this view is that organisations that are providing flexible scheduling to their employees attract employees of other organisations from the market (Khan, Khan, Khan & Shakeel, 2011).

An important correlation between employees and organisations adjustment to flexible work arrangement appears to reflect on the speed at which the roads are decongested from traffic should this mechanism be adopted over time in Lagos State, workers will report early to work places, performance of workers will increase, loss of lives will reduce due to a decrease in hazardous emissions, stress and strains that are caused by overstaying on the roads.

RESEARCH METHODS

The focus of this study is on specifying circumstances and deriving conditions under which flexible work arrangement can be applied in organisations in Lagos State with special emphasis on public schools. Firstly, there is the need to specify modalities for the generation of the research data. The study adopted a survey research method and a case study. Primary data were developed with the aid of questionnaire structured as open-ended and close-ended to allow both unrestricted and restricted responses. A total of 160 employees of CMS Grammar School, Bariga, Lagos were selected as sample size drawn from the school's population of 480.

The method of selecting this sample size was random sampling method. The structure of the questionnaires contained variables relating to demographic characteristics such as age, gender, income and predicting variables such as impact of flexible work schedules on employees' performance, impact of flexible work in road congestions, relationship between flexible work and organisational operational costs and impact of flexible work on daily commuting in Lagos State. Data analysis was conducted with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and the application of Pearson correlation coefficient. 5-Likert scale ranking method of strongly agreed (5) and strongly disagreed (1) was applied.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data analysis was conducted using likert 5 point ranking scale of strongly agreed (5) to strongly disagreed (1) Pearson correlation coefficient was applied to determine the statistical significance of the study.

Table 1: Research Questions

Items	Frequency	Percent (%)
Assessing the significant relationship between employees performance and flexible working schedules		
Strongly agree	106	66.3
Agree	45	28.1
Disagree	6	3.8
Neutral	1	0.6
Strongly disagree	2	1.2
Total	160	100
Examining the significant relationship between traffic congestion and flexible work schedules		
Strongly agree	96	60.0
Agree	51	31.9
Disagree	8	5.0
Neutral	3	1.9
Strongly disagree	2	1.2
Total	160	100
Analyzing the effect of flexible work schedules on the operational costs of public schools in Lagos State		
Strongly agree	76	47.5
Agree	28	17.5
Disagree	26	16.3
Neutral	10	6.2
Strongly disagree	20	12.5
Total	160	100
Examining the impact of flexible work schedule on daily commuting in Lagos State		
Strongly agree	102	63.8
Agree	46	28.8
Disagree	7	4.4
Neutral	4	2.5
Strongly disagree	1	0.6
Total	160	100

Source: Field survey, 2016

From the Table 1 above, 150(94.4%) of the respondents were of the opinion that there is a significant relationship between employees performance and flexible working schedules, 8(5.0%) disagreed, while 1(0.6%) were neutral about the

view. Thus, there is a considerable association between employees performance and flexible working schedules. 147(91.9%) of the respondents were of the opinion that there is a significant relationship between traffic congestion and flexible work schedules, 10(6.2%) disagreed, while 3(1.9%) were neutral about the view. Thus, there is a considerable association between traffic congestion and flexible working schedules. Furthermore, it was revealed that 104(65.0%) were of the opinion that flexible work schedules has effect on the operational costs of public schools in Lagos State, 46(28.8%) disagreed while 10(6.2%) were neutral about the view. Finally, 148(92.6%) of the respondents were of the opinion that flexible work schedule has impact on daily commuting in Lagos State, 8(5.0%) disagreed while 4(2.5%) were neutral. Therefore, flexible work schedule has impacted on daily commuting in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Hypotheses Testing

H₀1: There is no significant relationship between employees' performance and flexible work arrangement in public schools in Lagos State.

Table 1 Correlations Matrix For Hypothesis One

		Employee performance	Flexible work arrangement
Employee performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.720**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	160	160
Flexible work arrangement	Pearson Correlation	.720**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	160	160

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 above shows the Pearson correlation coefficient results, it is seen that the correlation coefficient is .720** while the p value is 0.000, this shows that there is a significant relationship between employees' performance and flexible work arrangement in public schools in Lagos State, thus the H₀ was rejected, since p value (0.000) is less than 0.01, while its alternative was accepted and this states that there is a significant relationship between employees' performance and flexible work arrangement in public schools in Lagos State.

H₀2: There is no significant relationship between the traffic congestion and flexible work arrangement in the state.

Table 2: Correlations Matrix For Hypothesis Two

		Traffic congestion	Flexible work arrangement
Traffic congestion	Pearson Correlation	1	.625**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	160	160
Flexible work arrangement	Pearson Correlation	.625**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	160	160

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Furthermore, Table 2 above shows the Pearson correlation coefficient results, it is seen that the

Table 3 Analyzing the effect of flexible work schedules on the operational costs of public schools in Lagos State

Response	SA	A	IND	DA	SD	Total	X ² cal	X ² critt	Df	P	Rem
	76	28	26	10	20	160	81.750	9.49	4	0.05	Accepted

Source: Field Study, 2016

Table 3 shows the chi-square value is 81.750 while the tabulated value is 9.49. Since calculated value is greater than the tabulated value at 0.05 (representing the level of significance). This implies that we should accept H₁. Accepting H₁ means that total operational

correlation coefficient is .625** while the p value is 0.000, this shows that there is a significant relationship between the traffic congestion and flexible work arrangement in the state, as such the H₀ was rejected, since p value (0.001) is less than 0.01, Hence its alternative was accepted and this states that there is a significant relationship between the traffic congestion and flexible work arrangement in the state.

H₀3: Total operational costs of the public schools will not be affected by the introduction of flexible work schedule in the schools.

costs of the public schools will be affected by the introduction of flexible work schedule in the schools.

H₀4: The level of daily commuting on roads in Lagos State will not be affected by the introduction of flexible work schedules.

Table 4 Examining the impact of flexible work schedule on daily commuting in Lagos State

Response	SA	A	IND	DA	SD	Total	X ² cal	X ² critt	Df	P	Rem
	102	46	7	4	1	160	233.313	9.49	4	0.05	Accepted

Source: Field Study, 2016

Table 4 shows the chi-square value is 233.313 while the tabulated value is 9.49. Since calculated value is greater than the tabulated value at 0.05 (representing the level of significance). This implies that we should accept H₁. Accepting H₁ means that the level of daily commuting on roads in Lagos State will be affected by the introduction of flexible work schedules.

DISCUSSION

The argument of whether flexible work arrangement has significant positive impact on employees performance has been confirmed by the outcome of the study. A total of 66.3% percent representing 106 of the total sample size testified that flexible work arrangement has a positive relationship with employees performance. This is also confirmed by the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between employees performance and flexible work arrangement in public schools in Lagos state. This is the view of Bartes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, and Neuman (1999) and supported by Glass and Finley (2002) that flexible work arrangement has positive effects on organisational commitment, retention and job satisfaction.

Again, the positive relationship between flexible work arrangement and road congestion is highlighted by the study. It tends to explain the pains workers suffer on a daily basis on their way to office. This study revealed that 60 percent representing a significant majority of 96 respondents testified that flexible work arrangement has a significant relationship with traffic congestions. The statistical relevance of this outcome is confirmed by the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between the traffic congestion and flexible work arrangement. The implication of this finding is that workers who are presently overstressed due to traffic congestions would like to opt for flexible work schedules. This finding tends to support the view of Rau and Hyland (2002) who averred that organisations offering flexible work arrangement are more attractive to employees than those organisations that do not.

Furthermore, there is the need to evaluate the impact of flexible work schedules on the operational costs of organisations and institutions in Lagos. A total of 47.5% of respondents testified that flexible work arrangement has an effect on the operational costs of the school under study. This outcome must have been influenced by the policy of these institutions to

eliminate all those costs that are related or paid to fixed term employees such as compensations where they are unnecessary. Thus, these institutions develop more interests in hiring more flexible work employees. The argument that this finding supports is associated with the stand of Khan, Khan, Khan & Shakeel (2011). They asserted that organisations that are providing flexible scheduling to their employees attract employees of other organisation from the market.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The explanations presented in this framework have revealed the veritable prominence of flexible work arrangements over and above all other forms of work schedules. It has been suggested that organisations that tend to remain viable in its environment must prioritize its work schedule by way of flexible work arrangements. The benefits include low cost of operation, better employee performances, workforce commitment and productivity. What is noteworthy about fixed term work schedule is not the fact that workers do not enjoy it but the arrangement does not allow them the opportunity to overcome stress, remain balanced in solving issues bothering on work-family conflict. With flexible work arrangements, it is potentially feasible that workers can now exercise full control of their best for the growth of the organisation. There has not been great difference in its benefits to road congestions and management of work-life stress. The fact that less workers commute on the road at a particular time make the roads to be less congested, afford the workers the opportunity to reach office on time with less boredom, reduce hazardous emissions and make the government to spend less on traffic and road management and maintenance annually.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Organisations and institutions that are operating in a densely populated states and cities such as Lagos state have been advised to realign their work schedules to suite the environmental characteristics of the place. It has also been advocated that these organisations should design their work schedules to significantly expand their work space to accommodate different types of flexible work employees. Gender discrimination should be excluded in the framing and designing of such work schedules because most of women would prefer working periods that will help them to maintain family-balance work life. On its part, the government should redeploy resources previously kept to maintain all day traffic to security because most flexible workers may like to work at odd hours such as late in the night.

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