

Flexi-Time Work Practice and Employee Productivity in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between flexi-time work practice and employee Productivity in tertiary institutions in Port Harcourt. The study used a correlational cross sectional design involving academic staff in four (4) tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Primary data was obtained using questionnaire as the research instrument. The target population of the study was. From the accessible records, the targeted population shows a total number of 3,194 academic staff. A sample size of 327 was obtained through the Taro Yamane sample size determination formula and the simple random technique was used. The internal reliability of the research instrument was tested using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient and only items that have an alpha reading of 0.70 and above were considered. After data cleaning only data of 294 respondents were finally used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics and Spearman's rank correlation were used for data analysis and hypothesis testing. The study findings confirm that there is a positive significant relationship between flexi-time work practice and employee Productivity in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The study recommends that management of tertiary institutions should encourage more the already existing practice of flexi-time work practices within the academic cadre to allow more devotion of time for research which is the bedrock of any tertiary institution.

Key Words: *flexi-time work practice, employee productivity, tertiary institutions*

Introduction

Stress is a universal phenomenon that essentially manifests itself in humans as a result of pressures emanating from several experiences or challenging situations. It is a part of daily life activities. Stress at workplace is an ever increasing problem in contemporary societies resulting in enormous costs both for the organization and for the individual employees (Ugoji and Isele, 2009). Work stress is believed to be a major contributor to absenteeism, low employee morale, high accidents and turnover rates as well as increasing medical expenses to many organizations. Work stress can be physically and mentally harmful to employee performance and employee commitment Wahab, (2010). Filippo (1984) suggests that work stress greatly contributes to health related problems among workers and organizational problems such as employee's dissatisfaction, low productivity, absenteeism and turnover Boehr and Newman (2004) Schuler (2008). Employees' job satisfaction is an important factor in any work setup. It may probably affect productivity directly or indirectly through employees' burnout, absenteeism, apathy and turnover, all of which can lead to lack of work continuity. When this happens without a firm grip of the crises and its solution, organization crashes. A veritable instrument to stem this development is flexi-time work practice.

In the current global work environment, there is intense competition for talented employees and for market share based on higher product quality and lower prices in order to realize strategic advantage. Competition requires organizations to take into account diversity of employee's needs, work life values, cultural influences in the areas where the companies operate as well as the diversity of working relationships in order to attract, retain and fully engage the employee. As many organizations come to terms with the challenges of attracting and retaining the best talent and retaining the best talent coupled with the emerging issues of work life conflicts, it is important that managers employ a variety of human resource practices to attain organizational goals (McLean & Collins, 2011). For many employees today both male and female lives are becoming more consumed with a host of family and other personal responsibilities and interests in addition to demands of the workplace (Grantol-Vallone & Donaldson, 2001). There is therefore a perceived imbalance between the demands of current lives and people's abilities to adequately cope with them and this may lead to an experience of stress (World of Work Report, 2011). In a society filled with conflicting responsibilities and commitments, flexi-time work arrangement has become a predominant issue in the workplace. Flexi-time work arrangements are defined as an alternative to the standard working day (Rau & Hyland 2002). It usually comprehends to organizational initiatives which enhance employees' flexibility on the time and place where work has to be accomplished, and also various policies exerting influence on the number of hours worked. Economic, technological, social and family changes have encouraged the introduction of flexible working arrangements.

According to Galinsky and Halpern (2005) work flexibility enables the workers to seek a new job or employer. Therefore labour turnover will be linked to the degree of flexibility the organization practices. Employees' absenteeism reduces as a result of work scheduling (Kelly, Kalev, Kossek & Hammer, 2008). As a result of practicing these schedule flexibility the organizations productivity improves. Research has shown that organization using schedule flexibility tend to perform better (Combs, Hall & Ketchen, 2006). When workers have no control over their work schedule it may lead to effects on them due to long hours they are subjected to (Fenwick & Tausig, 2001). On the other hand, workers' job satisfaction levels are affected (Askenazy, 2004 & Lambert, 2000). This study therefore intends to examine the relationship between flexi- time practice and employee Productivity in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. This study also seeks to provide answers to the following research questions:

- i. What is the relationship between flexi- time practice and timely delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?
- ii. What is the relationship between flexi- time practice and quality of work in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

Literature Review

Flexi-time Work Practice

Flexi-time is an arrangement which enables employees to choose when they start or finish their work than the usual time, provided they complete a certain number of hours (Kelly & Kalev, 2006). Employees are supposed to be present particularly in certain core hours (Eaton, 2003). Flexi-time enables organizations to have employees working in extended time without any increase in costs. Eldridge and Nisar (2011) states that less time is wasted in settling down. Employees are able to attend to their person responsibilities especially those young families and those attending to part time classes (Rocerto, Gupta & Mosca, 2011). According to Eldridge and Nisar (2011) studies have indicated organization using flex-time has less employee's turnover; there is more commitment and more gains in production. There is also

improved employee relations and improved communication (Haar & Spell, 2004). Casey and Grzywacz (2008) also sights reduced employee absenteeism as another benefit. Flexi time has limitation of making the organization to incur additional costs in setting a timekeeping system; the managers experience problems of supervising and rescheduling employees work (Travis, 2010). Employees not chosen to telecommute may have problems and therefore bring resentment to those allowed to do so (Mun & Yonekawa, 2006).

Employee Productivity

Productivity can be defined as a measure in relating the quality and quantity of output against the input provided by individuals to produce said output. The normal measure for productivity is to link a rand value against hours worked or tasks accomplished. The definition of productivity according to Robbins and David (2006) is the output of an employee that is measurable against the employee's effectiveness and efficiency in the achievement of the set goals or job tasks. Productivity is the driving force behind an organization's growth and profitability. It is the relationship between output of goods and services of workers of the organization and input of resources, human and non-human, used in the production process. In other words, productivity is the ratio of output to input. The higher the numerical value of this ratio, the greater the productivity (Burnstein & Fisk, 2003). Productivity has been defined as the measure of how well resources are brought together in organization and utilization for accomplishment of a set result. It is reaching the highest level of Productivity with the least expenditure of resources (Robbins & David, 2006).

According to Caldwell (2001), having the technical knowledge and ability does not guarantee that employees will be efficient and effective in their job tasks. To get effectiveness and efficiency in the work environment one also needs to provide the necessary resources that are required in accomplishing the task, have a supportive management structure and lead with vision, which is in alignment to the employees' goals and objectives. Employees are influenced by the management styles employed by their managers and as described by Caldwell (2001) the transformational leadership style can be closely tied to employee Productivity and productivity in an environment of change.

Employee productivity is the value added per employee divided by the average number of employees during the year converted into full-time equivalents. The quantity of goods and services that someone can produce with a given expenditure of effort, usually measured or averaged out in terms of time spent working or labour time. It is the ratio of the amount produced to the amount of labour put in it, measured as product per person-hour or person-year. Productivity growth reflects growth in output not attributable to growth in inputs (such as labour, capital and natural resources). Increases in productivity can be driven by technological advances (through innovation and increases in skills) or improvements in efficiency (making better use of existing technology). Over the long term, productivity improvements are considered to be the main contributor to higher results, profitability, earning and rising living standards (Burnstein & Fisk, 2003; Brown, 2005).

Measures of Employee Productivity

Timely Delivery

When the employees are productive, they accomplish more in a given amount of time. In turn, efficiency saves their company money in time and labour. When employees are unproductive, they take longer time to complete projects, which cost employee's more money due to the time lost (Olajide, 2000). The importance of higher productivity of the employees in public enterprise cannot be overemphasized, which include the following; Higher incomes

and profit; Higher earnings; Increased supplies of both consumer and capital goods at lower costs and lower prices; Ultimate shorter hours of work and improvements in working and living conditions; Strengthening the general economic foundation of workers (Banjoko, 1996). Armstrong (2006) stated that productivity is the time spent by an employee actively participating in his/her job that he or she was hired for, in order to produce the required outcomes according to the employers' job descriptions. As suggested by Bloisi (2003) the core cause of the productivity problems in the South African society are people's motivation levels and their work ethics.

Timeliness according to Mayberry, Nicewander, Qin and Billard (2006), can be referred to as the ability to reduce waiting times and sometimes harmful delays to clients by employees in attending to their needs. The scholar went further to emphasize that a high degree of responsiveness with respect to an activity that is not essential in achieving the organizations goals does not contribute to the effectiveness of organizations; hence hindering their ability to become competitive. Timeliness refers to the delivery of value to customers at an appropriate time. This is distinguished from the notion of speed which typically refers to how fast an organization could be in producing and introducing valuable products to the market ahead of its competitors (Mayberry *et al.*, 2006). This simply goes to mean that speeding up the work that is being done does not necessarily translate to responsiveness even though it can certainly yield greater output.

The present business milieu has become greatly influenced by globalization and as such is consistently breeding hyper-competition among key players in various industries both locally and internationally. These circumstances have forced organizations to adopt various strategies which they intend to use in redefining their approach towards dealing with the needs of their customers. Most organizations today more than ever have adopted the concept of empowering their teeming customers as a panacea towards attaining desired competitive advantage (Ekis & Arasli, 2007). However, organizations in their bid to respond to the challenges of environment and influence in business should focus on customer needs, wants and retention ability by being prompt in their service and product delivery.

Keeping to deadlines or promptness according to these authors, is necessary in attaining competitive advantage because the frequent meeting of the need of customers leads to increased customer loyalty, satisfaction, and retention. It could also be viewed as an approach that if adequately implemented, will have the tendency to increase the cost of customers switching to close competitors. Additionally, the primary purpose of strategic management system enhancement has been to improve efficiency in organization and strengthen strategic response capacity, as well as its capacity to attain and sustain competitiveness (Stahl & Grisby, 1999; Mintzberg *et al.*, 1995).

Quality of Work

Quality of work is a measure of Productivity and it is obtained by physically inspecting the products, collecting feedback from purchasers of products and services through survey, statistically sampling out products. Other methods of measuring quality of work include calculating percentage of product or work rejected and redone. Quality of work can also be measured by determining the reliability, compliance level, accuracy and judgment of experts (Lockwood and Ward, 2013). The term work quality refers to the positive and decent work outcome of an employee, work quality of an employee enables employee to enhance his or her job Productivity in the organization. The expected quality and quantity of task performed is according to Nwachukwu (2000) determined by the job standard, organizations according

to him monitors an employee's job Productivity by comparing it to accepted work measurements, often at various intervals. Besides evaluation of production, these demonstrations provide employers with opportunities to refresh a worker's job skills or address behavioural factors. One way to demonstrate quality of work is through product demonstrations. An employee with the ability to intelligently show and tell how products work to a manager or customer displays skilfulness. Employees demonstrate job excellence through Productivity evaluations. Measuring quality factors such as observing deadlines, using time wisely, finishing work, and using good judgment make an evaluation excellent. Measuring quantity factors such as regularly taking on new tasks and working positively on team projects leads to good job surveys, but ultimately the best measure of quantity is always a job statistic that is tracked regularly. After a good evaluation, an employee has proven he has the ability to exceed expectations and take on new job duties (Nwachukwu, 2000).

Flexi-time and Employee Productivity

Studies by Gariety and Shaffer (2001) have indicated that flexible scheduling provides for increased income. This income is associated with more gains in production and the employers tend to share these gains with their employees (Shepard, Clifton & Kruse, 1996). The HRM should weigh the flexible work practices mentioned, that is telecommuting, compressed work week, job sharing and flexi-time to ascertain the most appropriate ones to fit in their particular organizations depending on benefits and challenges of each one of them. Hill et al., (2001) investigated the extent to which flexible hours and flex place arrangements resulted in benefits for individuals (more satisfactory work family balance) and organizations (longer work hours). They reported that given a reasonable work week which they considered to be between 40 and 50 hours) per week, employees who perceived flexibility in the timing and location of their work, had less difficulty with work-family balance. Moreover Hill et al., (2001) reported that employees with perceived flexibility in the timing and location of work could work longer hours be for work- family balance was perceived to be a problem.

From a business perspective, Hill et al., (2001) results suggested that given a heavy workload perceived flexibility in the timing of work enables employees to work an extra day a week i.e. 60 hour a week, compared to 52 hours without flexible hours. O'Driscoll et al., (2003) suggests that the extent to which individuals have control and flexibility is a critical factor in the reduction of work family conflict. Flexi- time work arrangements are connected to a number of positive outcomes for employees who access them including better mental health and reductions in stress, burnout, turnover and absenteeism and increases in retention, loyalty, job satisfaction, innovation, creativity and productivity (Galinsky, Bond, Sakai, Kim & Giuntoli, 2008).

Based on the foregoing, we hypothesized thus:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship flexi- time practice and timely delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship flexi- time practice and quality of work in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

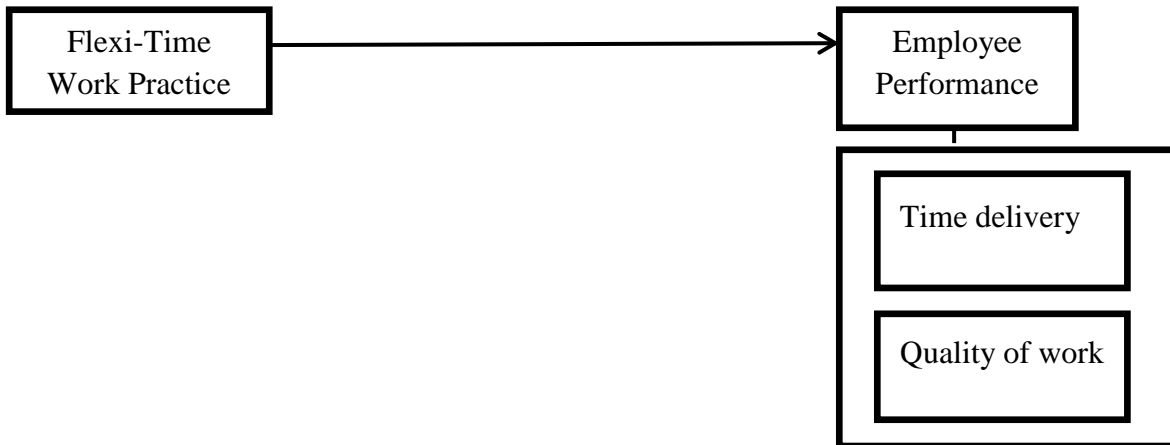


Fig.1 Operational Framework for the hypothesized relationship between flexi-time work practice and employee Productivity

Source: Desk Research, 2018

Methodology

The study used a correlational cross sectional design involving academic staff in four (4) tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Primary data was obtained using questionnaire as the research instrument. The target population of the study was. From the accessible records, the targeted population shows a total number of 3,194 academic staff. A sample size of 327 was obtained through the Taro Yamane sample size determination formula and the simple random technique was used. The internal reliability of the research instrument was tested using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient and only items that have an alpha reading of 0.70 and above were considered .After data cleaning only data of 294 respondents were finally used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics and Spearman’s rank correlation were used for data analysis and hypothesis testing with the aid of the SPSS Package version 21. The internal reliability of the instrument is as shown below:

Table 1: Reliability Statistics for the Instruments

S/No	Dimensions/Measures of the study variable	Number of items	Number of cases	Cronbach’s Alpha
1	Flexi-time	4	294	0.765
2	Employee Productivity	4	294	0.809

Source: Research data, 2018

Results and Discussions

Bivariate Analysis

The secondary data analysis was carried out using the Spearman rank order correlation tool at a 95% confidence interval. Specifically, the tests cover hypotheses H_{01} to H_{02} which were bivariate and all stated in the null form. We have relied on the Spearman Rank (ρ) statistic to undertake the analysis. The 0.05 significance level is adopted as criterion for the probability of either accepting the null hypotheses at ($p > 0.05$) or rejecting the null hypotheses at ($p < 0.05$).

We shall commence by first presenting a proof of existing relationships.

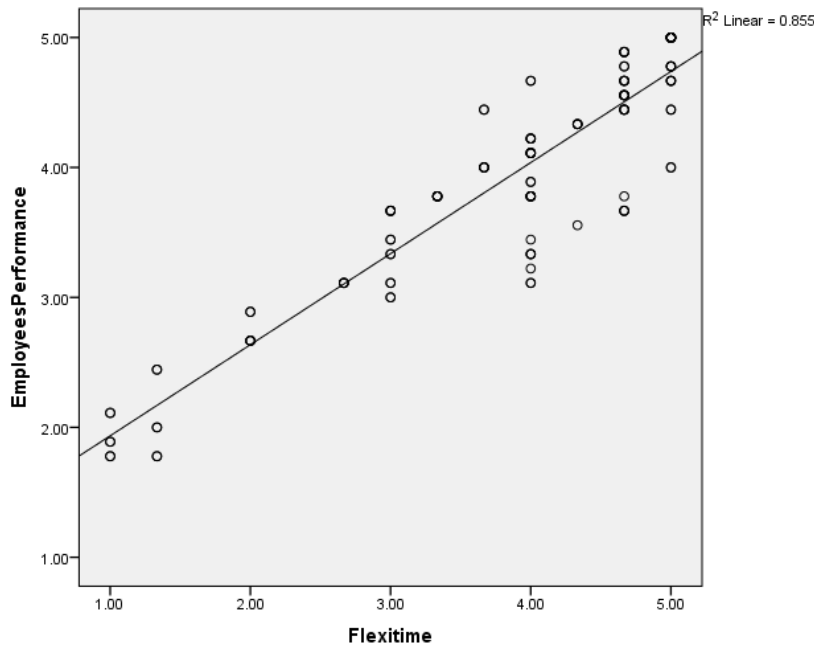


Figure 1: Scatter plot relationship between flexi-time and employee Productivity

The scatter plot graph shows at R^2 linear value of (0.855) depicting a very strong viable and positive relationship between the two constructs. The implication is that an increase in flexi-time work practice simultaneously brings about an increase in the level of employee Productivity. The scatter diagram has provided vivid evaluation of the closeness of the relationship among the pairs of variables through the nature of their concentration.

Table 3: Correlation matrix for flexi- time and Employee Productivity

			Flexitime	Timely Delivery	Quality of Work
Spearman's rho	Flexitime	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.736**	.675**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	294	294	294
	Timely Delivery	Correlation Coefficient	.736**	1.000	.675**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	294	294	294
	Quality of Work	Correlation Coefficient	.413**	.675**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	294	294	294

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

Source: Research Data June, 2018 (SPSS output, version 21.0)

The table above illustrates the test for the previously stated hypotheses.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between flexi-time work practice and timely delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between flexi-time work practice and timely delivery. The *rho* value 0.736 indicates this relationship and it is significant at $p\ 0.000 < 0.05$. The correlation coefficient represents a high correlation indicative of a strong relationship between the variables. Therefore, based on findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between flexi-time work practice and timely delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between flexi-time work practice and quality of work in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between flexi-time work practice and quality of work. The *rho* value 0.675 indicates this relationship and it is significant at $p\ 0.000 < 0.05$. The correlation coefficient represents a high correlation indicative of a strong relationship between the variables. Therefore, based on findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between flexi-time work practice and quality of in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed the existence of a significant positive relationship between flexi-time work practice and employee productivity in tertiary institutions in Rivers State using the Spearman's rank order correlation tool and at a 95% confidence interval. The findings of this study confirmed that flexi-time has a significant positive relationship with employee productivity. This finding corroborates the views of Kamau et al. (2013) who conducted study on flexible practices in Kenya concluded that flexible work practices improves employee job performance. Also our finding agrees with the study by Avery and Zabel (2001) in which he found that one manufacturing company changed its work schedule from working six hours per day to eight hours. This alteration brought increase in production because accidents reduced as well as increasing employees' morale. The program was accepted nationally by stakeholders from government and business organizations. The findings seems to agree with a study carried out in a certain company in which Shepard et al. (1996) states that organizations using flexi-time seems to improve on workers' performance. Furthermore, the finding of this study support Kirkley (1996) who found out that greater autonomy and discretion led to favourable outcomes such as high job satisfaction, high productivity, and high internal motivation. According to Casey and Grzywacz (2008) evidence suggests that one of the benefits of flexible work scheduling in the form of flexi-time is decreased absenteeism.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Flexible work practices allow employees the freedom to work outside the standard work schedules (Hill, Mårtinson, Ferris, & Baker, 2001). From the results of this study, it can be concluded that flexi- time work arrangements greatly influences employees' productivity in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that management of tertiary institutions should encourage the more the already existing practice of flexi-time work practices within the academic cadre to allow more devotion of time for research which is the bedrock of any tertiary institution.

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