

# Flexible Work Life and Employee's Productivity: Evidence from Nigeria

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***Abstract-*** *The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of flexible work life on employees' productivity in some selected hospitals in Delta State. Three research questions were raised and three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The survey research design was adopted while 297 employees of selected Hospitals in Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta State comprised the samples used for the study. The questionnaire was used as method of data collection. The questionnaire was validated by the research supervisor. A Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient was used to ensure internal consistency of the instrument, which yielded a high reliability coefficient. The data collected was analysed using Pearson coefficient of determination for the research questions and Pearson Product moment correlation coefficient for the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result obtained revealed that there is a significant relationship between flexible schedule and employees' productivity; that there is a significant relationship between flexible location and employees' productivity; and that there is a significant relationship between flexible length of work and employees' productivity. Based on the result, it was recommended that employees should be allowed to have flexible work arrangement by the management of the hospital.*

***Indexed Terms-*** *Location, Scheduling, Work-Life, Performance*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The achievement of competitive advantage, 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. 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 (Mungania, Waiganjo & Kihoro, 2016). 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, flexible work arrangement has become a predominant issue in the workplace. Three major factors contribute to the interest in and importance of serious consideration of flexible work arrangement: global competition, renewed interest in personal lives, family values and an aging workforce. Concerns have always been raised regarding policy and debates on flexible work arrangement from perspectives of the quality of working life when weighed against the broader family matters.

In view of the above, the aim of this study is to examine the impact of flexible work life on employees' productivity, some selected hospitals in Nigeria

It is widely observed that health provision in most hospitals in Delta State is not of the desired quality (Okonofua, et al., 2017). Despite availability of shifts in these hospitals, employee performance in terms of customer satisfaction, job satisfaction and employee turnover remains wanting. The problem is even more in most public hospitals in the state, due to the fact that they are managed by the government and individuals who work them are not properly supervised. Productivity and job satisfaction has led to continuous

strikes of nurse, doctors and health practitioners. The health care sector has faced numerous challenges.

The extent to which flexible work arrangements relates to employee productivity, innovation, employee satisfaction and turnover of health personnel and thus performance remain unclear in public hospitals. This study therefore is aimed to examine the impact of flexible work life on employees' productivity in some selected hospitals in Delta State. The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of flexible work life on employees' productivity in some selected hospitals in Delta State. Specifically, the study will:

1. assess the relationship between flexible schedule and employees' productivity
2. examine the influence of flexible location on employees' productivity
3. ascertain the impact of flexible length of work on employees' productivity

The following research questions have been raised to guide the study:

1. What is the relationship between flexible schedule and employees' productivity?
2. What is the influence of flexible location on employees' productivity?
3. To what extent will flexible length of work influence employees' productivity?

#### Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses have been formulated to guide the study:

- Ho<sub>1</sub> There is no significant relationship between flexible schedule and employees' productivity
- Ho<sub>2</sub> There is no significant relationship between flexible location and employees' productivity
- Ho<sub>3</sub> There is no significant relationship between flexible length of work and employees' productivity.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### • Flexible Work Life

Flexible work life, defined as an alternative to the "standard" workday Rau (2013), include flexible and restructured full-time options (flextime, compressed workweeks), reduced work-time options (part-time, job sharing, and leaves of absence) and off-site options (telecommuting) (Turban & Keon, 2013). By offering

flexible work life, organizations are supporting employees to reconcile their dual work-life responsibilities, and in doing so have helped "sustain" their workforce. Indeed, Flexible work life 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 performance (Wang & Walumbwa, 2011).

### • Employees' Productivity

Employee productivity is a measure employed at individual level based on the assumption that the overall productivity can be broken down to increasingly smaller units until, ultimately, to the individual employee, in order to be used for example for the purpose of allocating a benefit or sanction based on individual productivity (Fleck, 2009). Productivity may be evaluated in terms of the output of an employee in a specific period of time. Employee productivity is determined by a range of factors, including turnover, commitment and creativity and innovation (George, 2009).

These three distinct concepts are inseparably linked; commitment greatly influences Employee productivity, which in turn directly affects employee-employer relationships. Employees that feel as though the company has made a commitment to employee success tend to perform better (Persat, 2010). Commitment means offering a competitive rate of pay and benefits package, offering assistance in paying for employee's higher education costs, developing a regular training schedule that keeps employees updated on company changes and gives pertinent information for employees to do their jobs and upgrading equipment to make sure that employees have the most efficient technology available to do their work. Commitment shown by the company is returned in the form of commitment from employees.

High rates of turnover lead to higher costs related to recruiting and training new employees. It costs businesses money to hire human resource workers to interview and hire candidates and training new workers can be a costly process that diverts skilled workers from revenue-generating activities. Experienced workers who have to frequently train new

hires are less able to concentrate on their normal job duties. In a small business, the owner himself might have to train new employees (Baker et al 2011).

Productive people move through the tasks they have to accomplish in a systematic way. They make steady and measurable progress toward their goals. They make effective and efficient use of their time (Zoe, 2009). Employees' creativity makes an important contribution to organizational innovation, effectiveness and survival; there is a need for organizations to create the organizational contexts that are most supportive to idea generation and creative thinking. For employees to be creative there must be a work environment that supports the process of creativity (Zuber, 2011).

- Relationship between Flexible Work Life and Employees' Productivity

Having work life balance policies in the organization is connected to a number of positive outcomes for employees who access them, including reductions in stress, burnout, turnover, and absenteeism and increases in retention, loyalty, job satisfaction, innovation, creativity, and productivity (Meyer, Mukerjee & Sestero, 2011). Studies using self-report measures of productivity often find a positive association between telework and performance among employees (Gajendran & Harrison, (2011), and formal participation in telework programs has also been related to improved performance ratings from supervisors (Meyer, Mukerjee & Sestero, 2011). In their review of telework studies, Pitt-Catsouphes and Marchetta (2014) found productivity increases of between 10% and 30%, and Frolick et al.'s (2013) qualitative research among tele-workers and their managers also yielded positive reports of increased performance. Milkovich and Gomez (2010) also found positive effects of flexible work schedules on productivity in their meta-analysis. On the other hand, in reviewing the results from studies conducted by Ospina, Schall, Godsoe & Dodge (2014) concluded that a more limited amount of flexibility was optimal in predicting improved performance, with employees specifying in advance what hours they would work, rather than varying their schedule on an ad hoc basis. Shepard et al. (2010) collected information from 36 pharmaceutical companies in the U.S., covering an 11-year period, which indicated that the use of flexible

work hours is associated with an increase of approximately 10% in firm productivity. Rau and Hyland (2013) offer a dissenting view regarding the causal effect of work-life practices on firm productivity. In a survey of 732 medium-sized manufacturing firms in the USA and Europe, they found that while the number of work-life balance practices on offer was positively associated with both higher productivity and better management practices, the relationship with productivity disappeared after controlling for the overall quality of management as evidenced by practices such as better shop-floor operations or performance-based promotion systems. This would suggest that organizations offering a wider range of work-life practices to employees are also more likely to institute high quality management practices, which may be confounding the link between work-life practices and organizational performance. With regard to contextual performance, the perceived usefulness of available practices has been found to predict increased organizational citizenship behaviour (Lambert, 2010). Use of and satisfaction with work schedule flexibility has been associated with increased organizational commitment and reduced turnover intentions (Houston & Waumsley, 2013), and voluntary reduced hours have been linked to greater job satisfaction, loyalty, and organizational commitment (Rau & Hyland, 2013). In a study of the 'virtual office', Callentine's (2014) participants attributed an increase in job satisfaction to increased flexibility in the location and timing of their work. Teleworkers in Rau and Hyland (2013) also reported higher levels of job satisfaction. The availability of organizational resources, including flexible work hours, has been linked to job satisfaction and organizational commitment for women and for all employees with family responsibilities, regardless of whether or not these resources are being used (Roehling, Roehling & Moen, 2014). Similarly, an analysis of the (2012) Workplace Employee Relations Survey by Dex, Smith and Winter (2013) found that organizations offering parental leave enjoyed above average labour productivity and that the provision of flexible work hours and telework was associated with reduced turnover. In their meta-analysis, Gajendran and Harrison, (2011) found that telework was associated with increased job satisfaction and reduced intentions to turnover, with these relationships partially mediated by lower levels of work-life

conflict. Availability of work-life balance practices has also been related to increased affective commitment and decreased turnover intentions (Halpern, 2014). Perry-Smith and Blum (2014) found that parental leave; childcare information and referral, flexible work hours, and financial assistance with childcare predicted both increased affective commitment to the organization and decreased turnover intentions among all employees, not just users of the practices. A few studies have identified moderators of the practice availability – job attitude link. Kossek and Ozeki's (2013) review suggests that the provision of flexible work hours will be positively related to organizational commitment only if employees perceive the flexibility as increasing their control over their time.

Lightbody (2012) in his study “Flexible and compressed workweek schedules” found that flexible work schedules had positive effects on both job satisfaction and satisfaction with work schedule. Furthermore, telecommuting is associated with increased job satisfaction and reduced intentions to turnover, with these relationships partially mediated by lower levels of work-life conflict and results into organizational performance. Lightbody (2012) found that individuals with high levels of work-life conflict were more attracted to organizations that offered flexible working hours, while individuals with lower levels of conflict between work and life were more attracted to organizations that provided employee preferences for segmentation versus integration of work and family roles predicted attraction to work-life practices, with employees who preferred to keep their work and family lives separate being more satisfied with the provision of flexible hours rather than onsite childcare. Llewellyn (2009) found that for men, the availability of work-life practices was associated with higher organizational commitment only when perceived organizational support was high. For women, there was a positive link between practices and commitment regardless of levels of perceived organizational support. Work-Life Conflict is a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect (Mouritsen & Johanson, 2010). It is when one role interferes with individual effectiveness in the other role (Greenhaus, 2010). Thus work-life conflict can be referred to as work-life

interference, and the reduction of work-life conflict can be established by introducing work-life balance. Forsyth and Polzer-Debruyne (2011) conducted a survey of 1187 employees of organizations in New Zealand and found that employee's perception that employers were providing support for work life balance, improved their job satisfaction and reduced work pressures.

- Relationship between Flexible Schedule and Employees' Productivity

Employers have introduced flexible working packages (part of work-life policy) in order to attract, recruit, and retain highly qualified staff to their organizations (Croucher & Kelliher, 2005). With the ability to schedule the work himself/herself, employee feels that employer cares about wellbeing and non-working life of employee (Casper & Harris, 2008). That leads to increased satisfaction with the job and employer, resulting in higher work commitment (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010).

- Influence of Flexible Location on Employees' Productivity

Flexible location may be becoming increasingly popular across all industries. to go virtual by relying primarily on Internet and phone capabilities. Greer and Payne (2014) explored high performing teleworker strategies, supervisor perception of teleworker challenges, and successful teleworker strategies relating to work-family facilitation and turnover intentions.

Nieminen, Nicklin, McClure, and Chakrabarti (2011), Tremblay and Thomsin (2012), and Aboelmaged and El Subbaugh (2012) also noted that organizations have resorted to virtual work to increase productivity. Productivity outcomes can vary depending on the type of task the employee is performing. Dutcher (2012) used an experimental methods research approach to explore the effects of virtual work on employee productivity, focusing on the role that dull and creative tasks play. Dutcher (2012) recruited participants from Florida State University to take part in multiple tests that included both dull and creative tasks. The experiment included 125 research participants, 52% of which were men. Dutcher asked participants to complete a short behavioural questionnaire. Regression analysis on various hypotheses followed

data collection. Dutcher found that out-of-office productivity results were low for dull, repetitive tasks, whereas creative tasks produced high productivity levels.

flexible location may foster a greater sense of work-life balance and increased productivity in the workplace. However, remote workplace policies can cause negative spillover into the home domain (Adkins & Premeaux, 2014). Technological advances are providing workers with increased location flexibility; however, it is equally important to discuss potential drawbacks and work-life conflict issues (Adkins & Premeaux, 2014). Employees may feel an obligation to check e-mail and work all hours of the day into the evening, on the weekends, and while on vacation (Adkins & Premeaux, 2014).

- Influence of Flexible Length of Work on Employees' Productivity

According to Cole (2002) flexible length of work is utilizing more hours during a 24-hour cycle by incorporation more than one; working day'

According to International Labour Organization (ILO) working in shifts help the employees to succeed one another at the workplace so that the establishment can operate longer than hours of work of an individual worker at different daily and night hours. Shift arrangement is vital practice since it helps in reducing accidents, fatigue which in long run productivity in the organization will be realized.

Jane, Simon and Amos (2015) in their study on the Effect of flexibility in work arrangements programmes on job satisfaction of nurses in public hospitals in Nakuru county, Kenya established that public hospitals in Nakuru town, Nakuru County exempted expectant or breastfeeding nurses from night-shifts; that the existence of half-day work-shifts for nurses enable them to attend to their personal issues without stress and that night-offs given to the nurses after night-duty enable them to release stress and attend to family responsibilities easily.

- Research Method and Procedure

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. Ogula (2005) states that a research design is an approach

which seeks to give answers to research questions. The population of the study comprised all hospital employees in Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta State. The Delta State Health Management Board of the local government council place the total number of health centres to 31 with a total population of health workers at 1,158. The sample size for the study was comprise 297 employees of Hospitals in Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta State. using the formula recommended by Yamane (1967).A proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select health personnel, which will allow the researcher to sample employees in each hospital based on the total number of employees available in the hospital.

The primary instrument of this study was a questionnaire.. containing employees' productivity rating Scale (EPRS); Flexible Work Life Rating Scale (FWLRS). EPRS and FWLRS were constructed by the researcher on a four-point rating scale, which ranged from 1 for strongly disagree to 4 for strongly agree.

The data will be analysed with the aid of Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient. The hypotheses will be tested at .05 level of significance.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between flexible schedule and employees' productivity?

S/N	Statement	SA %	A %	D %	SD %
1	I often work flexible hours	24%	45%	16%	15%
2	I often adjust the days of the week that I work	18%	31%	18%	33%
3	To get ahead at this hospital, employees are expected to work more than 50 hours a week, whether at the workplace or at home.	25%	30%	25%	20%
4.	I feel comfortable requesting a change	30%	25%	20%	25%

	in my work schedule from my supervisor.				
5.	My supervisor suggests changes in my work schedule so I can better meet my work demands.	39%	31%	10%	20%
6	My supervisor never permits me to change my schedule.	27%	44%	16%	13%

7.	My co-workers would not like it if I changed my schedule	26%	41%	16%	17%
8.	My co-workers always support my desire for a change in my schedule.	25%	34%	14%	27%

Field Survey 2023

Table 3: Analysis of the relationship between flexible schedule and employees’ productivity

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup> %	Decision
Flexible Schedule					
Employees’ Productivity	263	0.49	0.24	24	Positive Relationship

Table 3 shows a correlation coefficient which was used to determine the relationship between flexible schedule and employees’ productivity. From the result,  $r^2 = 0.24$ , which shows the extent of relationship between flexible schedule and employees’ productivity. The result indicates a positive relationship between the two variables. Flexible schedule contributed 24% of the variance in employees’ productivity.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of flexible location on employees’ productivity?

S/N	Statement	SA %	A %	D %	SD %
1	I often work from a location other than the office	30%	40%	20%	10%
2	My supervisor allows me to run personal errands during the workday.	48%	22%	17%	13%

3	Whenever I am not feeling too well, I am allowed to work from home	19%	47%	20%	14%
4.	At times I am placed on calls while I attend to some personal issues	22%	44%	17%	17%
5.	I am allowed to travel whenever I wish to	26%	36%	24%	14%
6	Sometimes, I am go out of the hospital to attend to patients	52%	28%	15%	5%

Field Survey 2023

Table 4: Analysis of the influence of flexible location on employees’ productivity

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup> %	Decision
Flexible Location					
Employees’ Productivity	263	0.39	0.15	15	Positive Relationship

Table 4 showed that  $r^2 = 0.15$ , which signifies the influence of flexible location on employees' productivity. The result indicates a positive relationship between the two variables. Flexible location contributed 15% to the variance in employees' productivity.

Research Question 3: To what extent will flexible length of work influence Employees' Productivity? The result of table 5 below will be used to answer research question 3

S/N	Statement	SA %	A %	D %	SD %
1	In general, I often use a flexible working arrangement	40%	20%	15%	25%
2	In this hospital employees can easily balance their work and personal lives	20%	34%	30%	16%
3	Employees are regularly expected to put their jobs before their personal lives	25%	30%	24%	21%

4.	I feel my supervisor makes an effort to understand my need to be flexible.	20%	49%	17%	14%
5.	My supervisor always grants my requests for a change in my schedule.	35%	20%	15%	30%
6	I feel comfortable discussing changes in my work schedule with my co-workers.	40%	15%	15%	30%
7.	I feel my co-workers make an effort to understand my need to be flexible.	36%	26%	18%	20%
8.	My co-workers suggest changes in my work schedule so I can better meet my work demands.	43%	34%	16%	7%

Field Survey 2023

Table 5: Analysis of the influence of flexible length of work on employees' productivity

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>r</i>	$r^2$	$r^2$ %	Decision
Flexible Length of Work					
Employees' Productivity	2	0.	0.	1	Positive Relationship
	6	3	1	1	
	3	3	1		

Table 5 shows a correlation coefficient which was used to determine the influence of flexible length of work on employees' productivity. From the result,  $r^2 = 0.11$ , which shows the extent of relationship between flexible length of work and employees' productivity. The result indicates a positive relationship between the two variables. Flexible length of work contributed 11% to the variance in employees' productivity.

Analysis of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between flexible schedule and employees' productivity

Table 6: Regression analysis of the relationship between flexible schedule and employees' productivity

Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	p
Regression	7247.404	1	7247.404		
Residual	22539.501	261	86.358	83.923	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Total	29786.905	262			

- a. Dependent Variable: Employees' Productivity
- b. Predictors (Constant): Flexible Schedule

Table 6 is the result of a regression analysis of the relationship between flexible schedule and employees' productivity. The result shows that  $F(1, 262) = 83.923$ ,  $p < 0.05$  level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that there is a

significant relationship between flexible schedule and employees' productivity.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between flexible location and employees' productivity

Table 7: Regression analysis of the relationship between flexible location and employees' productivity

Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	p
Regression	4419.708	1	4419.708		
Residual	25367.197	261	97.192	45.474	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Total	29786.905	262			

- Dependent Variable: Employees' Productivity
- Predictors (Constant): Flexible Location

Table 7 shows a regression analysis of the relationship between flexible location and employees' productivity. The result showed that  $F(1, 262) = 45.474$ ,  $p < 0.05$  level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between flexible location and employees' productivity.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between flexible length of work and employees' productivity

Table 8: Regression analysis of the relationship between flexible length of work and employees' productivity

Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	P
Regression	3269.591	1	3269.591		
Residual	26517.314	261	101.599	32.181	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Total	29786.905	262			

- Dependent Variable: Employees' Productivity
- Predictors (Constant): Flexible Length of Work

Table 8 shows a regression analysis of the relationship between flexible length of work and employees' productivity. From the result,  $F(1, 262) = 32.181$ ,  $p < 0.05$  level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This means that there is a

significant relationship between flexible length of work and employees' productivity.

• Discussion of Finding

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between flexible work life and employees'



productivity. Three hypotheses guided the study. The first null hypothesis states that there is no relationship between flexible schedule and employees' productivity. The result of hypothesis one showed that there is a positive relationship between flexible schedule and employees' productivity, the study found that a higher opportunity for flexible schedule will lead to a higher productivity among employees. This finding confirms the assertion of Casper and Harris (2008), who noted that with the ability to schedule the work himself/herself, employee feels that employer cares about wellbeing and non-working life of employee.

The second hypothesis states that there is no relationship between flexible location and employees' productivity. The result showed that there is a positive relationship between flexible location and employees' productivity with a higher level of flexible location likely to lead to a higher level of productivity job satisfaction. This result corroborates the finding of Anderson and Kelliher (2009), which showed that flexible work life result in employee loyalty and engagement, increased organizational commitment, and higher job satisfaction, also flexible working packages help to recruit and retain talented employees for the organization.

The third hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between flexible length of work and employees' productivity. The result revealed that there is a positive relationship between flexible length of work and employees' productivity. The study showed that as employees are given opportunity for flexible length of work, their productivity will likely improve. This finding is in line with the study conducted by Anon (2008), which revealed that increased productivity, reduced employee turnover and absenteeism have been identified as advantages of flexible work life for the employers.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the result obtained in the study, it can be concluded that flexible work life can influence the productivity of employees, this means that if employees are allowed to have flexible schedule, flexible location and flexible length of work, their productivity is likely to improve.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are hereby proposed based on the findings of the current study:

- a) Employees should be allowed to have flexible work arrangement by the management of the hospital
- b) Employees should be allowed to have flexible location arrangement by the management of the hospital
- c) Employees should be allowed to have flexible length of work by the management of the hospital

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