

EFFECT OF WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE A CASE STUDY OF AL-BABELLO TRADING COMPANY, ZARIA, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between workplace flexibility and employee performance in Al-Babello Trading Company, Zaria from 2005 – 2021. The objective of the study include: to examine the relationship between job sharing and employee performance, to evaluate the relationship between working remotely and employee performance. The survey research design was used based on the population of the company, which was one thousand two hundred (1200), but reduced to 300 using Taro Yamane formula for the sample size. Data was obtained through questionnaire and analyzed with the aid of SPSS statistical software and regression. The findings indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between workplace flexibility and employee performance in Al-Babello Trading Company, Zaria. Other findings were that there is a positive and significant relationship between job sharing and employee performance while there was a negative and insignificant relationship between working remotely and employee performance in Al-Babello Trading Company, Zaria. The study recommends that the management of Al-Babello Trading Company should continue and encourage job sharing as a form of workplace flexibility practice as it improves skills and productivity of employees, while any form of working remotely should be discontinued for now.

Keywords: Workplace flexibility; employee performance; job sharing and working remotely.

1. Introduction

Flexible work practices, according to Rau (2003), are several types of work schedules that allow employees to work outside of the typical work day. A written or informal agreement between an employer and an employee to allow individual job control over flexibility in scheduling, location, quantity, or continuity in conjunction with non-work demands is characterized as workplace flexibility. Workplace flexibility is becoming more common as a formal policy and an informal work practice for both personal and professional reasons.

Given the degree to which society's requirements are changing, most governments and commercial companies throughout the world have recognized the value of workplace flexibility and the impact it may have on employee performance. Flexible practices, according to Golden (2008), are not a novel concept and have been employed by other organizations. Flexible practices have been implemented throughout Africa, but to a lesser level (Horwitz & Franklin, 1996). It is typical practice in European Union countries to balance employees' working hours and personal lives (Jones & Jones, 2011). Employees with flexible work practices have the opportunity to work outside of regular work schedules (Hill et al 2001). When adopted, workplace flexibility benefits both the business and the employee. When an employee can work from home, it saves money on transportation and allows them to combine work and family life while also engaging in non-work related activities.

There are several issues impacting employee performance in most work situations (McCourt, 2013), like workers who prefer occupations with some flexibility. According to Galinsky (2005), such as the ability to pick when to report and leave work. Most employees do not give their best, claiming non-work-related activities or family difficulties as reasons for their lower level of job performance, which invariably impacts unit performance and achievement of organizational goals. Working long hours and not having enough time to attend to workers' personal commitments are the causes of the problem (Cooper, 2008).

Increased workplace flexibility has a positive impact on productivity. However, research has shown that work-life balance has two benefits (Pedersen & Lewis, 2012). There has, however, been no study done to determine the impact of flexible work practices on employee performance. Using Al-Babello Trading Company, Zaria, and this study sought to determine the impact of workplace flexibility on employee performance, particularly in the private sector.

Given equivocal results and the persistent gap between the positive rhetoric surrounding workplace flexibility compared to the challenges in translating research to practice reported by some employers, this research integrates employer and employee views to close the research-practice gap that has existed.

The general objective was to establish the influence of workplace flexibility on employee performance of staff of Al-Babello Trading Company, Zaria. While its specific objectives is to establish the extent to which job sharing influences Employee Performance in Al-Babello Trading Company, Zaria, determine the extent to which working remotely influences Employee Performance in Al-Babello Trading Company, Zaria.

The scope is restricted to the effect of workplace flexibility on employee performance in Al-Babello Trading Company, Zaria. Al-Babello Trading Company, Zaria is a major seller of all kinds of building materials ranging from roofing sheets, cement, ceiling, woods, doors, tiles, PVC ceilings, POP materials, and also other items like sewing machine, maize thrashing machine and Fertilizer. Data for this study was collected once in 2021 and it covers the period of 2005 to 2021, which extensively shows a reasonable period. Al-Babello Trading Company, Zaria has a staff population of over one thousand two hundred staff (1200) of full time and part and also contract staffs spread over the 19 northern states and Lagos and Enugu.

The hypotheses for the study are formulated in line with the specific research objectives as follows:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between job sharing and Employee Performance

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between working remotely and Employee Performance

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual Framework

2.1.1. Job Sharing

According to Branine (2003) two workers can share work duties by using the job sharing option. Each employee works half-time, with one reporting in the morning and the other in the afternoon, for example. Employees, on the other hand, must possess complimentary talents (Kossek & Lee 2005). Employment sharing, according to Bliss and Thornton (2010), allows two people to alternately perform the responsibilities of a full-time job. In the mid-1960s, job sharing became a reality. This was supposed to be a solution for employment that couldn't be split into two part-time jobs. Job sharing allows businesses to keep their full-time staff while also benefiting from their skills (Gliss 2000).

Organizations that use this type of flexibility benefit from sourcing individuals' abilities and expertise in one position; it allows employees to tap into their talents; it allows employees to learn from one another; and it relieves employees while they are gone. Job sharers are able to keep full-time employment (Miller 2007). Job sharing is not usually widespread in various industries. According to Miller (2007), just 11.1 percent and 15.8 percent of counselor education forum members had ever engaged in work sharing. Some of the reasons for its unpopularity include expense; managers find it difficult to supervise; and it is difficult to recruit and retain very accountable employees.

2.1.2. Working Remotely

Working remotely entails working from home or a central location that is handy for consumers (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002). Employees communicate with their supervisors and coworkers through their phones, email, and fax machines. Previous research has revealed that companies that practice working remotely have a higher employee retention rate (Grippaldi, 2002). There are many forms of working remotely, according to Kurland and Bailey (1997). Home-based, satellite offices, neighborhood work centers, and mobility employees are some of the most frequent options.

Working remotely, on the other hand, has its drawbacks. According to Madsen (2011), people who work remotely may feel cut off from the organization's structure. Employees are unable to engage with one another, resulting in a sense of disconnection. Employee relations and teamwork are also impacted. Inadequate resources and a lack of technical assistance are issues. Career advancement is also impacted (Khaifa & Davidson, 2000). The company is unable to keep a close eye on the performance of workers who choose to work from home. This might have an impact on jobs that can be measured.

2.1.3. Employee Performance

Performance is the art of completing a task within the set parameters. Employee performance is influenced by a variety of circumstances at work, and it is described as the manner in which a job assignment is carried out in accordance with the job description. (Saeed et al 2013). Employee performance refers to how well employees comprehend the task, their capacity to do it, and how much effort they put in to do so (Williams & Anderson, 1991). Dessler (2008) defines Employee performance as the completion of a work-related job that is required of employees and the quality with which the task was completed. Performance can be monitored on a monthly, quarterly, semi-annual, or yearly basis in order to enhance a certain company sector. Employee performance, according to Inuwa (2016), is critical to organizational development and profitability, and management's capacity to understand employee happiness and its relationship to schedules and daily responsibilities will have a significant influence on employee performance.

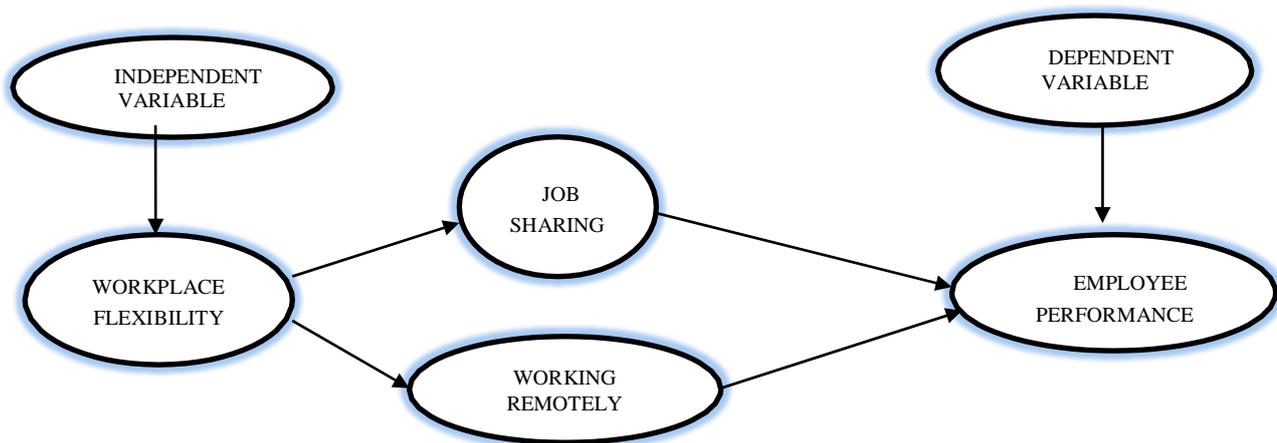


Fig 1: Conceptual model of the relationship between working remotely and employee performance

Source: Researchers Depiction (2021)

2.2. Empirical Review

Kiran and Khumran (2018) studied flexi time and employee happiness at workplace. The study aimed at finding out the relationship of internal workplace flexibility with employee happiness. The study collected data from ten (10) registered software houses in Lahore, Pakistan, using self-administered questionnaires, with 358 participants in the survey. Non-parametric analysis of the data shows flexi time has a positive relationship with affective organizational commitment, employee engagement, job satisfaction and thus employee happiness. Thus, it concluded that where organization give discretion to its employees to decide about when, where, what and how to work, it makes employees more committed, engaged, satisfied and thus happier.

Onyeizugbe, et al (2019) investigated the relationship between flexi time and employee performance of manufacturing firms in Anambra state of Nigeria. The study was based on the attribution theory by Heider (1958). The descriptive survey design was adopted with a population of 220 and Pearson moment correlation coefficient was used to analyze the data. The findings reveal that there is a significant relationship between self-roistering and employee retention in the manufacturing firms in Anambra state. The study concludes that flexible timing has a significant positive relationship with Employee Performance and the study recommends that the management of the studied manufacturing firm should imbibe self-roistering as part of the flexible timing procedure; it tends to enhance the employees' commitment in their jobs which leads to their retentions in the organization, and it brings about good quality products manufactured.

Sam, et al (2020) investigated the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance of twenty-One (21) Deposit Money Banks with Regional Headquarters in Port-Harcourt, Rivers State. Data was generated from (367) three hundred and sixty seven employees of Regional Headquarters of Deposit Money Banks in Port-Harcourt, Rivers State while the Taro Yamane's formula was used to determine the sample size of (191) and the Bowley formula was used to determine the optimum sample size distribution via simple random sampling techniques. Data were presented using descriptive statistics in form of frequencies, central tendencies and measures of dispersion. The hypotheses were tested using Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Co-efficient aided with Statistical Package for Social Science version 23.0. The test for hypotheses revealed that there is a significant relationship between flexible work arrangement as a dimension of work-life balance and the measures of employee performance. Consequently, all the null hypotheses are rejected as the evidence indicates significant levels of relationship in all instances. The findings indicate that flexible work arrangement significantly enhances employee's performance outcomes such as excellent service delivery,

efficiency and effectiveness. Hence, this study recommends that management of these banks should ensure that they create flexible work schedules for their employees as it is recognized to have positive contributions to employee performance.

Njiru (2016) investigated the influence of flexible work practices on employee performance in Public sector in the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government, Embu County. The study was carried out at the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government and a descriptive survey design was adopted. The study targeted all the 50 employees in the Institution. Census was done since the population was rather small and data was collected by use of structured questionnaires from 47 respondents out of 50 employees (3) did not respond. Data was analyzed by Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and both descriptive and inferential statistics were conducted. The linear and multiple regression analysis were done to establish relationship among all the variables in the study. The study established that the institution did have flexible work practices policy in place; similarly the study found out that telecommuting had not affected employee performance in the institution; employees used telecommuting to a very small percentage and it influenced job satisfaction and staff morale, increased productivity but in a very small percentage. The study further revealed that compressed work hours influenced employee performance, job satisfaction and enhanced staff morale in a very small percentage. However, job sharing and flexi time were being used by majority and influenced employee performance, job satisfaction, staff morale, reduced absenteeism and contributed to cost effectiveness and efficiency in a big percentage. The study recommends that employees allowed to telecommute should be facilitated to do so. The Institution should also provide other forms of flexible practices, for instance, shift, part-time and weekend work.

Govender (2017) examined flexible work arrangements, job satisfaction and performance of Eskom share services. A quantitative research approach was employed with online questionnaires being distributed using QuestionPro, an online survey tool. Using the simple random sampling technique, a sample size of 92 employees were requested to participate in the survey, 62% of these participants completed the online questionnaire. Data analysis, using SPSS, revealed that Flexible work arrangements is preferred amongst the majority of employees and that a significant positive relationship exists between flexible work arrangements as the independent variable and job satisfaction and performance as the dependent variable amongst employees of all ages. The availability of Flexible work arrangements enriches work life balance which increases job satisfaction and performance.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

Control theory

According to the concept, the more control one has over his or her work needs, the higher one's well-being. Employees can have a say in how their jobs are designed if their workplace is flexible (e.g., timing of work, location of work, and amount of work); Fonner & Roloff, 2010; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). The capacity to manage one's surroundings is widely acknowledged as a key factor in determining one's happiness (Ganster & Rosen, 2013). Employees will be stressed if they have demanding jobs with little or no control. Employees in high-demand positions who are given control experience less stress, according to research (Gronlund, 2007). Job sharers and remote employees, on the other hand, have the advantage of balancing work and personal obligations. The employee's work control necessitates this. Employees who are allowed to have workplace flexibility may be able to devote more time to non-work activities such as attending evening or part-time classes or caring for their family.

3. Methodology

This study uses a quantitative approach to test the theory. The target population consisted of over 1200 employees consisting of full time and part and also contract staffs spread over the 19 northern states and Lagos and Enugu. The population comprised of employees from all levels in the company. The sample size is deduced using Taro Yamane computation approach. According to Yamane (1967), the sample size of the study is derived thus;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

N = the population size

e = the margin of error (assumed at 5%)

1 = constant

$$n = \frac{1200}{1 + 1200(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1200}{1 + 1200(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{1200}{1 + 3}$$

$$n = \frac{1200}{4}$$

$$n = 300$$

Therefore, the sample size of the study is 300 employees of Al Babello Trading Company, Zaria. Although 310 questionnaires were distributed, 300 were accepted and useful. A simple random sampling technique was used to administer questionnaire to the respondents. A simple random sampling technique is used to ensure that all the sample size is given equal chance in the study. A self-administered questionnaire and also Google forms was used in gathering the data. The respondents were provided with guidelines to ensure that they understood the questions and to respond suitably. The questions were worded in an open-ended manner to provide quantitative data as per the research response category. A Likert scale of 5 was used to measure the extent to which the various respondents agreed or disagreed with the issues raised. The copies of the questionnaire were distributed directly, and using created Google forms, were distributed via company centered social media platforms.

The study used descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation as well as percentages. The study also used regression and correlation. Regression was used to estimate the cause and effect relationship between the dependent and the independent variables, while correlation was used to ascertain the degree or strength of a relationship between the variables.

The study adopted a correlation and multiple regression models. The regression model as stated;

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1x \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Where y= dependent variable, α = intercept β_1 = coefficient x = independent variable.

However, the above mode is expressed as:

$$EP = \alpha + \beta_1JS + \beta_2WR + \mu \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

Where;

EP = Employee performance

α = intercept

β = coefficient

μ = error term
 JS = job sharing
 WR= working remotely
 Correlation model

$$r = \frac{\sum xy}{(\sum x^2)(\sum y^2)}$$

r = correlation coefficient
 ∑=Summation
 x = dependent variable
 y = independent variable

4. Data Analysis

Data for this study is presented in tables using frequencies and percentages, with the number of respondents outside bracket and the percentage in bracket.

Table 1: Presentation of Responses on Job Sharing

JOB SHARING	SA (5)	A (4)	(3) UD	D (2)	SD (1)
1 Al Babello trading company is positive towards Job Sharing	105(35)	86 (28.6)	75 (25)	29(9.6)	5 (1.6)
2 Job sharing affects my performance	96 (32)	106(35.3)	47(15.6)	46(15.3)	5 (1.6)
3 Combining my work with someone enhances efficiency and effectiveness	110(36.6)	87 (29)	55(18.3)	41(13.6)	7 (2.3)
4 Working with a more skilled individual has improved my skill	83 (27.6)	124(41.3)	50(16.6)	34(11.3)	9 (3)

Field Survey, 2021

Table 1 show the response of respondents to questions relating to job sharing. The table shows that 35% of respondents strongly agree that the company is positive towards jobs sharing and 35% also strongly agree that job sharing affects their performance. The table also shows that 36% of respondents strongly agreed that combining their work with someone enhances their efficiency and effectiveness also 41% agree that working with more skilled individual has improved their skill. This table clearly shows that employees of Al Babello Trading Company generally agree or strongly agree to these questions.

Table 2: Presentation of Responses on Working Remotely

WORKING REMOTELY	SA (5)	A (4)	(3) UD	D (2)	SD (1)
Al Babello trading company is positive towards working remotely	17 (5.6)	64(21.3)	8 (2.6)	111 (37)	100(33.3)
Working remotely has reduced stress level and improved performance	38(12.6)	75 (25)	86 (28.6)	91 (30.3)	10 (3.3)
Working remotely has improved work-life balance	33 (11)	50(16.6)	13 (4.3)	123 (41)	81 (27)
Working remotely has improved efficiency and effectiveness	26 (8.6)	54 (18)	2 (0.6)	58 (19.3)	160(53.3)

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 2 shows the results of response of respondents to questions on working remotely. The table shows that 37% of respondents disagreed with the question on if Al Babello Trading Company was positive towards working remotely and a further 30% also disagreed with the question on if working remotely has reduced stress level and improved performance. 41% of the respondents disagreed with if working remotely has improved work-life balance and also the table shows that 53% of respondents strongly disagreed on whether working remotely has improved efficiency and effectiveness.

Table 3: Presentation of Responses on Employee Performance

EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE	SA (5)	A (4)	UD (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
Efficiency has improved in Al Babello trading company	87 (29)	140(46.6)	50 (16.6)	21 (7)	2 (0.6)
Employee effectiveness has improved over the years in Al Babello trading company	107(35.6)	100(33.3)	57 (19)	31(10.3)	5 (1.6)
Employee commitment has increased in Al Babello trading company	161(53.6)	67 (22.3)	42 (14)	26 (8.6)	4 (1.3)
Job satisfaction has increased in Al Babello trading company	98 (32.6)	116(38.6)	58(19.3)	20 (6.6)	8 (2.6)

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 3 shows the results of response of respondents to questions on Employee Performance. The table shows that 46%% of respondents agreed with the question on if Al Babello Trading Company had improved its efficiency, 35% also strongly agreed that it has improved its effectiveness and also 53% strongly agreed that employee commitment has increased. Finally, 38% agreed that job satisfaction has increased in Al Babello Trading Company.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
JS	300	1.00	5.00	3.8225	1.06947
WR	300	1.00	5.00	2.0275	.65546
EP	300	1.00	5.00	3.9925	.97188
Valid N (listwise)	300				

Source SPSS version 20.00

The table 4 revealed the result of descriptive statistics indicated the mean and standard deviation as well as the minimum and maximum value of the variables. The mean value of job sharing (JS) is 3.82, working remotely (WR) is 2.02, the mean value of employee performance (EP) is 3.99. The table also recorded the standard deviation of the variables as JS is 1.06, WR is 0.655 and EP is 0.97

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

Correlations				
		JS	WR	EP
JS	Pearson Correlation	1	.910**	.878**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	300	300	300
WR	Pearson Correlation	.910**	1	-.443
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.600
	N	300	300	300
EP	Pearson Correlation	.878**	-.443	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.600	
	N	300	300	300

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

Table 2 indicates that there is a strong positive association between job sharing and employee performance with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.878$ at 1% statistical level of significance. There is also a weak negative correlation between working remotely and employee performance correlation coefficient of $r = -0.443$ at 1% statistical level of significance

Table 4: Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.778 ^a	.757	.737	.20213

a. Predictors: (Constant), WR, JS

Table 5: ANOVA

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	270.286	2	135.143	3307.725	.000 ^b
1	Residual	12.134	297	.041		
	Total	282.421	299			

a. Dependent Variable: EP
b. Predictors: (Constant), WR, JS

Table 6: Coefficients

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	.591	.043		13.608	.000
1	JS	.926	.026	1.019	35.078	.015
	WR	-.045	.030	-.044	-1.532	.127

a. Dependent Variable: EP

Decision Rule: 5% level of significance

The statistical decision rule of p- value states that the null hypothesis should be accepted if P- value is greater than alpha value (i.e level of significant which is 0.05) otherwise it should be rejected while the alternative hypothesis is adopted. F- Stats is 3307 with a p- value of 0.000. The $R^2 = 0.75$ indicates that only 75% of variation in employee performance in Al Babello trading company, Zaria can be explained by job sharing and working remotely. The remaining 25% can be explained by other related factors not noted in the regression model which is referred to as the error term.

The regression coefficient for Jobs Sharing is 0.926 with a p- value of 0.015 which is less than alpha value (0.05) therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies a positive and significant effect of Job Sharing on employee's performance in Al Babello trading company, Zaria. This indicates that an increase in Job sharing relates to a significant corresponding increase in the employee performance in Al Babello trading company.

The regression coefficient for working remotely is -0.045 with a P- value of 0.127 which is greater than alpha value of 0.05. Therefore, there is no reason to reject the null hypothesis. This implies a negative and insignificant effect of working remotely on employee performance in Al Babello trading company, Zaria. This indicates that an increase in working remotely relates to an insignificant decrease in employee performance.

Discussion of Findings

The study found out that workplace flexibility has a positive and significant effect on employee performance in Al Babello trading company, Zaria. Other findings were that job sharing has a positive and significant effect on employee performance in Al Babello trading company, Zaria. The finding is in line with findings of Njiru (2016), that found that there is significant relationship between job sharing and employee performance. Also, the study found out that working remotely has a negative and insignificant effect on employee performance in Al Babello trading company, Zaria, this is in disagreement with Govender (2017), and Sam et al (2020) who found out that working remotely has a significant relationship with employee performance. The study is in line with the control theory which states that the more control one has over his/her job demands, the better his/her well-being and performance.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that job sharing affects employee performance in Al Babello trading company, Zaria. This implies that job sharing contributes significantly to employee's performance in Al Babello trading company, Zaria. The findings also showed that working remotely has a negative and insignificant effect on employee performance in Al Babello trading company, Zaria. The study therefore recommends in line with the findings and conclusions of the study as follows:

1. Al Babello trading company, Zaria should continue and encourage job sharing as a form of workplace flexibility practice and supervisors and heads of department within the company should ensure that employees have suitable partners to share jobs with, as it improves both skill and productivity level
2. Working remotely has no positive nor significant effect on employee performance of Al Babello trading company and as such, any form of it should be discontinued as it leads to a reduction in performance and it's not suitable for the organization at this time.

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