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Role of Flexible Working Hours' Arrangement on Employee Job Performance and Retention in Manufacturing Industries in Agbara, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the role of flexible working hours' arrangement on employee job performance and the retention of employees. Flexible working hours' arrangements are preferable for employees across different cohorts, levels, gender, and are one of the most sought-after benefits. Purposive sampling technique was used to collect data from 227 permanent and contract employees from five manufacturing industries in Agbara, Ogun State. Data were collected through the use of a flexible working hour questionnaire developed by Hill, Hawkins, Ferris and Weitzman, (2001). An eight-item questionnaire of affective organisation commitment by Meyer and Allen (1991) was used to measure employee retention. Questionnaire designed by Rose (2005) was used to measure employee work stress. The data collected was analyzed based on descriptive analysis of demographic information using table. Linear Regression and Pearson Correlation were used to test the three hypotheses presumed for this study. This study found that flexible work-hour arrangements improved employee performance, increased retention of employees and reduced employee work stress. It is recommended that a proactive strategy be adopted by organisations to improve the alignment between flexible work-hour agreements and other human resource policies such as recruitment, promotion, training, rewards and performance assessment.

Key words: *flexible working hours; employee performance; employee retention; work stress; manufacturing industries*

JEL Classification: *M10; M12; M15*

Introduction

As work and family life change, one major problem that individuals face today, and even more so in the future, is balancing work with family responsibilities and duties. Flexible working hours' arrangement appears to be an important part of the organisational responsibility to its employees. In the past, it has never been so easy to combine work with home and family life in Nigeria, but the introduction of flexible working hours has made it possible today, especially in manufacturing industries. Employers and human resources managers need to understand the value of flexible working hours to ensure that workers do not work too hard, thus reducing their efficiency, which may lead to a rise in employees' turnover and job stress. Flexible working hours' arrangements will benefit employers and motivate employees in the long run, so

employers should not assume that it is merely an undue advantage for employees to be satisfied on their own.

Flexible working hours are an employer tool used to reduce employee stress and improve employee performance and job retention. Flexible working hours are a substitute work schedule as compared to the regular work arrangement in Nigeria, i.e. from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. or 5:00 p.m. and from Monday to Friday or Saturday, in some cases every week for several years. Flexible work-hour arrangements, such as part-time jobs, shift job, work-sharing, shortened 24-hours per day, work from home for nursing mothers, five-day job a week, sabbatical leave, career flexibility, leave and so on, need to be taken into account by the human resources department of an organisation to minimize the work-life conflict of employees, motivate employees and improve their performance. Flexible working hours is one of the most innovative ideas in the area of human resource management and the business environment (Idowu 2014), and can only be an innovation of effective and successful leaders who understand the dynamics of the increasingly changing global business environment (Idowu 2019).

McMaster (2005) argued that flexible work conditions, such as leave or a change in working hours, offer an opportunity to align the individual's needs with those of the needs of the workplace. These may include how organisations separate men's work and women's work, restructuring of jobs, part-time work, full-time work and contract work, and all other flexible work practices. According to Glass and Finley (2002), the majority of companies that have implemented flexible working hour scheduling strategies in their workplaces have become more family-friendly because flexible working hour arrangements are standard components of many family-friendly human resource policies. Flexible working hour agreements have been described as an effective means of balancing job and other employee responsibilities (Dex & Smith 2002).

Flexible working hours are usually arrangements between an employee and his or her employer in which they agree to schedule work flexibly and benefit both parties (Galea, Houkes & De Rijk 2013). Employees may do better at work if they are not constrained by very tight work schedules. Over the years, it has been recognized that flexible work structures can be helpful for both organisations and workers and can help to maintain a work-life balance (Nijp, Beckers, Geurts, Tucker & Kompier 2012). Wheatley (2016) viewed flexible workplace practices are frequently implemented in a manner that benefits companies rather than workers. The goal of flexible working was to help workers balance work and personal life as easy as possible with minimal conflict. According to Rastogi, Rangnekar, and Rastogi (2015) flexible work arrangements can provide the opportunity to control one's schedules and improve the well-being of employees and their work-life enrichment.

Despite all measures taken by employers to increase the performance of employees, retain talented and skilled workers and reduce work stress, some employers still face these problems based on some of the reasons that have not been effectively investigated. The purpose of this study is therefore to investigate the role of flexible working hours in the performance of employees, retention of employees, and work stress. The implementation of flexible working hour structures and policies in all organisations, both private and governmental, would help to find solutions to the challenges of work and family conflict. If flexible working hour arrangements are taken as a priority by all human resource managers to reduce the workload of employees and balance between work and family issues, these problems will be greatly reduced to a minimum. Flexible working hours' conditions can be a key factor in attracting and maintaining top talent in all sectors, if properly harnessed. Cohen and Single (2001) argued that there is a lot of pressure on companies to become more family-friendly. The basic idea is that a family-friendly organisation will help people find a balance between their families and their jobs (Rogier & Padgett 2004). Almer and Kaplan (2002) argued that flexible work schedules help to overcome stress and burnout.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the types of flexible working hours' arrangement policies and procedures being practiced in manufacturing industries.
2. To determine the role of flexible working hours' arrangement on employee job performance in manufacturing industries.
3. To examine the role of flexible working hours' arrangement on employee retention in manufacturing industries.
4. To investigate the impact of flexible working hours' arrangement in reducing employee work stress in manufacturing industries.

Research Hypotheses

- H1: Flexible working hours' arrangement has positive significant impact on employee job performance.
- H2: Flexible working hours' arrangement has positive significant impact on employee retention.
- H3: There is significant relationship between flexible working hours' arrangement and employee work stress.

Literature Review

Concept of flexible working hours

Tomlinson (2007) described flexible working hours as the duration of time the employee works and the pattern of work, including leave or other absence taken from work. Pillinger (2006) noted that flexible working hours have been recognized as a solution to demographic changes in the labor market, including increasing women's participation and increasing competition in the global economy. Coenen and Kok (2014) argued that, in most situations, flexible working hours are implemented by employers because workers want flexibility. It is advantageous because employee happiness and well-being result in decreased turnover and improved performance (Masuda et al. 2011). Again, because flexible working conditions seek to provide both employers and workers with a win-win situation, employees can benefit from flexible working hours by taking charge of their day, which allows them the flexibility to change their family and personal time (Coenen & Kok 2014).

According to Torrington, Taylor, Hall and Atkinson (2011) job flexibility entails not only variability in time and place of employment, but also sharing of jobs, career breaks (maternity/paternity leave), part-time and term job. Possenried and Plantenga, (2011) addressed three broad categories of flexible work arrangement (FWA) which are flexi-time (flexibility in scheduling), tele-homework (flexibility in location), and part-time (flexibility in the duration of work). Although each structure may be used individually, it is mostly combined to complement each other (Chung 2009). Atkinson and Hall (2011) proposed that flexibility in work would offer ease in planning, not in reducing working time. Therefore, flexibility in the job may be defined as the ability of the employee to control both the length of his / her working time and the location of his/her job (remotely from the office). This ability in scheduling work should be provided by the employer. Several researchers suggest that flexible work practices promote work and family harmony, and that changing family patterns are advantageous for both women and men (Pruyne 2012, Hofacker & Konig 2013).

Companies using flexitime tend to be both more productive and efficient, and employers seem to share the marginal benefits of flexible working time agreements with at least some of their employees (Wolf & Beblo 2004). Indeed, it appears that in many, if not most industries in the United States, shorter hours are associated with higher rates of output per hour (Holman, Joyeux, & Kask 2008). A survey of members of World at Work and AWLP (2005) on flexible work schedule indicates that 73% of the respondents agreed that a flexible work schedule improves the quality of life for the employees as well as for their families. Only 6% disagree and 21% remained neutral. This indicates that when there is a good balance between the work and the family of an employee, the employee and his family will both be satisfied. Rogier and Padgett (2004) opined that flexible scheduling also helps the employees in reducing their work-family conflicts by making a good work and family balance.

Employee retention and flexible working hours

Flexible working hours is an important building block for the success of any organisation, and is a powerful tool for the organisation to retain talented and skilled employees. Panoch (2001) was of the view that organisations today take great care in retaining its valued employees and good employees as they are increasingly becoming tougher to locate. Walker (2001), stated that managing and retaining promising employees' is an important fundamental means of achieving competitive advantage among organisations. To retain a good talented workforce, the organisation has to create a positive environment for conducive working (Chaminade 2007). According to Chiboiwa, Samuel and Chipunza (2010) retention is the process in which an employer takes steps to prevent the job switching of their key employees. Retention is an effort by which an employer makes some good policies to retain talented employees to achieve the organisational goals and success (Frank, Finnegan & Taylor 2004). A study analyzed that good and successful organisations do respect their employees and try to make policies more flexible for the betterment of employees (Samuel 2008).

Cutler (2001) argued that one of the most important management demands of any organisation today is to keep the most vital and dynamic human resources motivated and dedicated. It is not important to see who the organisation hires, but what counts is who is kept in the organisation. Researchers such as Amadasu (2003) and Gberevbie (2008) have found that, if appropriate employee retention strategies are adopted and implemented by organisations, employees will surely remain committed to the achievement of organisational objectives. In the opinion of Acton and Golden (2003) the Human Resources Department plays an important role in the retention of its workers. It makes employee improvement policies such that employees would be satisfied with the organisation and stay with the organisation for longer periods. Idowu and Abolade (2018) argued that employers in Nigeria are concerned about keeping employees engaged and committed in whatever way they can. Flexible working hour arrangements could be a better way to keep employees fully engaged and committed to an organisation goal and objective. Employers have introduced flexible work packages (part of work-life policy) to attract, recruit and retain highly qualified staff to their organisations (Croucher & Kelleher 2005).

Organisations that provide flexible working hour schedule to help work and family life can have a competitive advantage in hiring and retaining valued employees. Evidence suggests that flexibility policies increase the size and quality of the applicant pool (Clifton & Shepard 2004). Some workers with unique skills, such as highly talented professionals or jobs with higher turnover (such as nursing, service jobs) can leverage the workforce to encourage employers to offer flexible schedules or to impose preferred administrative structures (such as flexible hours) on their organisation (Barringer & Milkovich 1998). Flexible work schedules often allow the development of internal labor markets to retain workers, making it more unattractive for employees to leave the company, as they increase opportunity costs of looking for comparable alternative employment (Davis & Kalleberg 2006). This has potential cost savings for

employers, as resources and time are not spent on constantly recruiting and training new workers who are unlikely to be as productive as experienced workers.

Employee stress and flexible working hours

Tension or anxiety is another word for stress. Stress is the way human beings react physically and mentally to changes in their lives, work, and environment. Topper (2007) described stress as a person's psychological and physiological response to perceptions of demand and challenge. Olagunju (2010) defined stress as a chronic, complex emotional state with apprehension and characteristic of various nervous and mental disorders. Schabracq and Cooper (2000) suggested that occupational stress led to low productivity and morale, low efficiency, high turnover, sick leave, injuries, low work satisfaction, low-quality goods and services, weak internal communication, and organisational conflict. According to Lockett (2012) stress is triggered by extra work, pressure to reach deadlines, or fear of failure. In general, stress happens when an employee has no control of when, where, and how he/she works. High-stress rates can contribute to mental and physical health problems, such as headaches, depression, heart attack, and cancer; stress is also an antecedent of unhappy and disharmonious relationships that cause work-life conflict (Looker 2011). Flexible working hours have been related to lower rates of work-life conflict (Hill, Hawkins, Ferris & Weitzman 2001).

In life circumstances, the workplace stands out as a potentially significant source of stress primarily because of the amount of time spent in this environment (Erkutlu & Chafra 2006). Stress is an unavoidable consequence of modern life. It is a state of tension that has a direct effect on a person's emotions, thought and physical conditions (Jayashree 2010). In reality, stress is much more common among employees at lower levels of work hierarchies, where they have less control over their work situation (Beheshtifar & Nazarian 2013). More recently, studies have concentrated on workplace stress in different occupations, such as nurses, physicians, police officers, teachers, and academics (Plattner & Mberengwa 2010). Seeking steps to minimize the negative effects of stress, several studies have proposed flexible work conditions that would potentially boost the efficiency of employees. Work-family harmony tends to minimize work-family conflict (Frone, 2003, Grzywacz & Marks 2000).

Methodology

Research design

The study adopted a quantitative research design to examine the role of flexible working hours on employee job performance, employee retention, and employee stress. According to Wolman and Kruger (2004) the quantitative research design defines the strategy for extracting information from the study participants in a numerical format. The type of quantitative research design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey design, the objective of which, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2001) is to define and collect detailed information about an existing phenomenon or exploring the significant relationship between two or more phenomena.

Population of the study

The population of the study consists of the manufacturing and processing industries in Agbara, State of Ogun, Nigeria. The target population consists of permanent and contract/temporary staff of five selected manufacturing and processing industries.

Research instrument

This research used the questionnaire as an instrument for the collection of primary data. The questionnaire was created by Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, and Weitzman (2001). The eight-item questionnaire on affective organisation commitment by Meyer and Allen (1991) and the self-constructed eight-item questions on the role of flexible working hours in employee retention were used to measure employee retention. The questionnaire developed by Rose (2005) on job-related stress was also used to measure employee work stress. Throughout the pilot analysis of these questionnaires, reliability tests were carried out to determine the internal accuracy of each measure. Cronbach Alpha coefficients were reported as follows: 0.82 for Flexible Working Hours Scale, 0.84 for Employee Performance Scale, 0.79 for Employee Retention Scale, and 0.88 for Employee Work Stress Scale.

All questions were answered using a four-point Likert Scale that ranged from 4 = 'strongly agree' to 1 = 'strongly disagree.' It was made up of three parts. Section A consists of the demographic information of the respondents. Section B consists of questions on the role of flexible working hours on employee performance. Section C consists of questions on the role of flexible working hours on employee retention and work-related stress.

Sample and sampling techniques

Purposive sampling technique was adopted in the selection of five manufacturing industries since they practice flexible working practices for both their permanent and contract / temporary workers. The random sampling technique was used to pick 50 permanent and contract / temporary workers from each of the five manufacturing industries, making a total of 250 respondents. Out of the 250 questionnaires distributed, 227 questionnaires were properly filled by the respondents and were retrieved for analysis which represented 90.8% of the total questionnaire distributed for this study. The study centered on Agbara in Ado-Odo Otta Local Government Area of Ogun State, as it is one of the largest industrial concentration areas in Ogun State and a major manufacturing hub in Nigeria. Ogun State is divided into 20 local government areas with an approximate population of 4 million. This study cut across employees with different socio-demographic backgrounds such as gender, age, education, marital status, child care responsibility, and types of flexible working arrangements policies available.

Data collection and analysis procedures

Permission was received from the authorities (Plant Managers) of the industries under review before the administration of the questionnaire. A questionnaire with a cover letter explaining the analysis was personally sent to the five manufacturing industries for the respondents to fill out their answers. Data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed and interpreted in a manner consistent with the use of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to test both independent and dependent variables. Three hypotheses were tested using the regression analysis for hypotheses one and two and Pearson correlation for hypothesis three. All hypotheses have been tested at 0.01 alpha levels of significance.

Research Findings

Section A: demographic information of respondents

This section shows the results of the findings of the demographic information, research objectives and research hypotheses. The demographic information being studied are gender, age, marital status, educational qualification, years of working experience, child care responsibilities.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Respondents (n=227)

Demographic Information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender: Male	153	67.4%
Female	74	32.6%
Total	227	100.0%
Age: 20-29 Years	49	21.6%
30-39 Years	75	33.0%
40-49 Years	69	30.4%
50 Years and above	34	15.0%
Total	227	100.0%
Marital Status: Single	102	45.0%
Married	119	52.4%
Separated	6	2.6%
Total	227	100.0%
Educational Qualification: PRY/SSCE	12	5.3%
OND	76	33.5%
HND/B.SC/B.A	118	52.0%
M.SC/M.A/MBA and others	21	9.2%
Total	227	100.0%
Years of Working Experience: 0-5 Years	72	31.7%
6-10 Years	108	47.6%
11 Years and above	47	20.7%
Total	227	100.0%
Child Care Responsibility: Yes	128	56.4%
No	99	43.6%
Total	227	100.0%

Source: Researchers' field work, January 2020.

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of respondents for this study. Based on the results, male respondents were 67.4% and female respondents were 32.6%. This shows that there are more male workers than female workers in manufacturing industries in Agbara. Majority of the respondents 33.0% are within the age range of 30-39 which is the active working force, respondents within the age range of 40-49 are 30.4%, respondents within the age range of 20-29 are 21.6% while respondents aged 50 years and above are the least working age with 15.0%. Marital status of respondents was considered, single respondents are 45.0%, while 52.4% respondents were married and 2.6% of the respondents are separated.

The study in table I above also looked at educational qualification of respondents, most of the respondents with 52.0% had HND/B.Sc./B.A. degree as their academic qualification, followed by those who had OND degree are 33.5%, while 9.2% had M.Sc./M.A/MBA and other degrees and respondent with PRY/SSCE (5.3%) are the least. The study sought to know the years of experience of the respondents. Respondents with 6-10 years working experience are the highest with 47.6%, followed by respondents with 0-5 years working experience which are 31.7% while respondents with 11 years and above working experience are the least with 20.7%. Child care responsibility of the respondents were also considered, respondents with child care responsibility are 56.4% while respondents without child care responsibility are 43.6%.

Section B: test of objective one of the study

To identify the flexible working hours' policies and procedures being practiced in the selected manufacturing industries.

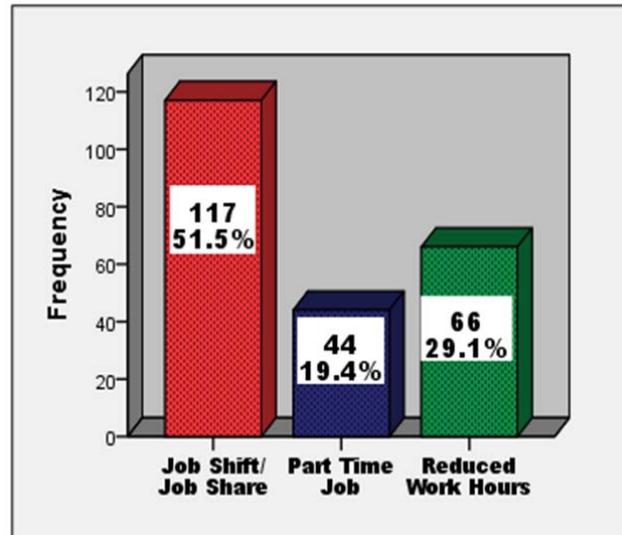


Fig. 1. Flexible Working Hours Policies Being Practiced in the Five Selected Manufacturing Industries

Source: Researchers' field work, January 2020.

Figure 1 shows the analysis of the flexible working hours' policies being practiced in the selected manufacturing industries in Agbara, Ogun State. Among the 227 respondents for this study, respondents with 51.54% agreed that the manufacturing industries mostly practice job shift/job share followed by reduced work hours with 29.07% while part time job is the least flexible working hours' policy practiced with 19.38%.

Section C: test of research hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Flexible working hours' arrangement has positive significant impact on employee job performance.

Table 2. Regression Model Summary^b on Flexible Working Hours' Arrangement and Employee Job Performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	Df 1	Df 2	Sig. F Change
1	.870 ^a	.757	.756	.269	.757	702.160	1	225	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Flexible Working Hours' Arrangement

b. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

Source: Researchers' field work, January 2020.

The regression analysis result presented in table 2 revealed the coefficient of R-square (R^2) which is 0.757 shows that flexible working hours' arrangement accounts for 75.7% of the total variance which is a very high variation in the determination of employee performance. This percentage is very high and statistically significant. This shows that flexible working hours has a positive significant impact on employee job performance.

Table 3. ANOVA^a on Flexible Working Hours' Arrangement and Employee Job Performance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	50.797	1	50.797	702.160	.000 ^b
Residual	16.278	225	.072		
Total	67.075	226			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Flexible Working Hours' Arrangement

Source: Researchers' field work, January 2020.

Table 3 of the ANOVA summary shows that the statistically calculated F-value of 702.160 is greater than the critical F-value of 6.63 at (0.01) level of significance at 225 degree of freedom. The alternative hypothesis (H₁) is therefore accepted, which states that the flexible working hour arrangement has a positive impact on employee's job performance. The remaining variance of 24.3% in flexible working hours and employee performance may be accounted for by other independent variables not considered in this present study.

Hypothesis 2: Flexible working Hours' arrangement has positive significant impact on employee retention.

Table 4. Regression Model Summary^b on Flexible Working Hours' Arrangement and Employee Retention

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	Df 1	Df 2	Sig. F Change
1	.960 ^a	.922	.921	.217	.922	2651.338	1	225	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Flexible Working Hours' Arrangement

b. Dependent Variable: Employee Retention

Source: Researchers' field work, January 2020.

The regression analysis results presented in Table 4 above show that the coefficient of R-square (R²) is 0.922 and shows that the flexible working hour arrangement accounts for 92.2% of the variance, which is a high variation in the determination of employee retention. This percentage is very high and statistically significant. This means that flexible working hours have a positive impact on employee retention.

Table 5. ANOVA^a on Flexible Working Hours' Arrangement and Employee Retention

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	124.947	1	124.947	2651.338	.000 ^b
Residual	10.603	225	.047		
Total	135.551	226			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Retention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Flexible Working Hours' Arrangement

Source: Researchers' field work, January 2020.

The ANOVA results presented in table 5 shows that the statistically calculated F-value of 2651.338 is greater than the critical F-value of 6.63 at (0.01) level of significance at 225 degree of freedom, therefore the alternative hypothesis (H₁) is accepted which states that flexible working hours' arrangement has positive significant impact on employee retention. The

remaining variance of 7.8% in flexible working hours and employee retention may be accounted for by other independent variables not considered in this present study.

Hypothesis 3: There is significant relationship between flexible working hours' arrangement and employee work stress.

Table 6. Correlation between Flexible Working Hours' Arrangement and Employee Work Stress

Variables		Flexible Working Hours' Arrangement	Employee Work Stress
Flexible Working Hours	Pearson Correlation	1	.956**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	227	227
Employee Work Stress	Pearson correlation	.956**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	227	227

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

Source: Researchers' field work, January 2020.

Table 6 describes the Pearson correlation analysis which shows that there is significant relationship between flexible working hours' arrangement and employee work stress ($r = 0.956$, $p < 0.01$, $n = 227$). Thus, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted and proven to be true that there is significant relationship between flexible working hours' arrangement and employee work stress.

Table 7. Summary of Results in Relation to Research Hypotheses

No	Hypotheses	Findings	Sig.	Remarks
H1:	Flexible working hours' arrangement has positive significant impact on employee job performance.	Accepted	.000	Significant
H2:	Flexible working hours' arrangement has positive significant impact on employee retention.	Accepted	.000	Significant
H3:	There is significant relationship between flexible working hours' arrangement and employee work stress.	Accepted	.000	Significant

Source: Researcher's field work, 2020.

Table 7 presents the findings of this research, which indicates that the flexible working hour's arrangement has a positive effect on employee job performance, thus the research hypothesis one was accepted. Hypothesis two was accepted that suggested that the flexible working hours' arrangement had a positive effect on the retention of employees. Finally, research hypothesis three postulated for this study was also accepted that concludes that there is a significant relationship between flexible working hours' arrangement and employee work stress.

Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis One: The finding in hypothesis one means that employees are at their best when they are given the opportunity to schedule their working hours based on their individual ability to carry out the task given to them. As flexibility allows employees the freedom to decide when, where and how they want to function, flexibility certainly leads to enhancing the output of workers. The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of Leslie, Manchester, Park and Mehng (2012) that flexible work has the potential to benefit both employees and organisations by encouraging positive work attitudes and high levels of employees' performance. Shepard, Clifton and Kruse (1996) postulated that flexible working hours could increase organisational productivity because employees could choose to work during peak hours

in terms of personal performance. It is also clear that flexible work conditions are very critical in maintaining the success of employees.

Hypothesis Two: The finding implies that employees are always happy when they are able to work flexibly, which will eventually encourage them to continue working in such an organisation. In general, workers would choose to stay for a longer period of time if flexible job schedules are enforced by the organisation. The findings of this study are consistent with the results of the Grobler and de Bruyn (2011) studies, which stated that work flexibility would lead to the retention of top talent. Moen, Kelly, Tranby and Huang (2011) argued that increased workplace autonomy and time control through an organisational policy initiative might minimize the employee turnover rate. Masuda et al. (2011) concluded that flexible work is advantageous because employee satisfaction and well-being result in reduced turnover.

Hypothesis Three: The finding implies that flexible working hour schedules will provide workers with flexibility and autonomy over how they schedule their work and their personal lives, allowing them more time to relax when necessary and alleviate work stress. Employees feel less stressful when they have more control over their schedule (Almer & Kaplan 2002). This is in line with the Galinsky et al. (2008) study, which argued that flexible work arrangements are linked to a number of positive outcomes for employees who have access to them, including improved mental health and reduced work stress, burn-out and increased retention. Clark (2001) suggested that the company's support and flexibility for home demands would tend to reduce stress for all employees. Research has shown that work-life balance is associated with reduced levels of stress and somatic complaints (Rathi & Barath, 2013).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examined the role of flexible working hours on employee job performance and the retention of employees in Manufacturing Industries in Agbara, Nigeria. Four research objectives were postulated for this study. The study adopted a quantitative research design and the target population consists of permanent and contract/temporary staff of five selected manufacturing and processing industries. Purposive sampling technique was used to collect data from 227 respondents. Questionnaires were used as a research instrument for this study and all questions were answered using a four-point Likert Scale ranging from 4 = 'strongly agree' to 1 = 'strongly disagree'. Cronbach Alpha coefficients were reported as 0.82 for Flexible Working Hours Scale, 0.84 for Employee Performance Scale, 0.79 for Employee Retention Scale, and 0.88 for Employee Work Stress Scale.

The findings of this study in hypothesis one concluded that flexible working hours had a positive significant impact on employee job performance. Working flexibly guarantees that employees will have enough time for office activities and also with home duties, therefore helping employees to improve their performance. This coincides with the study of Nazem and Seifi (2014) they opined that the quality of the work-life and its dimensions significantly affected the productivity of employees. Chow and Keng-Howe's (2006) study found that the more flexible the schedule of employees, the higher their self-reported productivity.

The study in hypothesis two concluded that flexible working hours has a positive significant impact on employee retention. The study of Hyland (2000) is in conformity that flexible working arrangement would reduce the turnover of employees. The use of flexible work arrangements has been linked to improved organisational commitment, motivation and job satisfaction (Nadeem & Henry 2003). The availability of flexible job arrangement practices is related to a decrease in the turnover intentions of all employees and not just users of the practices alone (Grover & Crooker 1995). Abolade (2019) also concluded in her study that organisations should ensure that they have policies that address the challenges faced by employees at home in order to retain the talented among them.

This study concluded in hypothesis three that there is significant relationship between flexible working hours' arrangement and employee work stress. Wheatley (2016) confirmed that flexi-time promotes work-life balance and well-being for employees because it reduces work-life conflict, pressure and stress. Galinsky, Bond, and Friedman (1996) argued that the implementation of flexible scheduling at the workplace would be beneficial and reduce employee's job stress.

Finally, this study concluded that when companies implement flexible policies on work conditions, there would be an increase in the performance of workers. Organisations will be able to retain the best and most talented employees, and employees' work stress will be reduced to the minimum which might reduce work and family conflict. Furthermore, in this growing economy and competitive market, flexible working policies need to emerge as an important human resource strategy in order to support competitive advantage.

Suggestion for further research

Further studies on the impact of flexible working hour arrangements on employee performance and employee retention in manufacturing and service industries should be conducted to determine the difference between the two sectors in terms of work place flexibility.

Recommendations

1. Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that employers and human resource managers promote greater alignment between flexible work arrangements and other human resource policies, such as recruitment and promotion policies, training and development policies, reward system policies, performance assessment policies, equal opportunity policies, and so on.
2. Considering that not every employee is expected to have flexible work arrangements, the study also recommend that human resources policies be structured to ensure that workers who opt for flexible working hours do not suffer from career growth and promotion in order to maintain and enhance their performance.

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