

HYBRID WORK MODEL AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE OF SELECTED TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

¹Akhigbe Thompson, Ikhide & ²Chiekezie, Obianuju Mary, Ph.D.

¹Department of Business Administration,
Edo State University, Uzairue
akhigbe.thompson@edouniversity.edu.ng
&

²Department of Business Administration,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

KEY WORDS

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model, employee
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ABSTRACT

This work examined the relationship between hybrid work model and employee performance of selected tertiary institutions in South-South Nigeria. The broad objective was to determine the type of relationship that existed between hybrid work model and employee performance of the selected tertiary institutions while the specific objective was to examine the relationship between flexible work schedules and employee engagement of the selected tertiary institutions. The study was anchored on Job Demand Resource Theory postulated by Bakker and Demerouti (2007). A survey research design was adopted for the study. Primary and secondary sources of data were employed for the study. Structured questionnaire was the data collection tool employed by the study. A study population of three hundred and forty-eight (348) was used. Pearson Product Moment Correlation and regression analysis were used to test the hypotheses with the aid of SPSS version 20 and E-Views 10. The result obtained from the test of hypothesis revealed that a positive significant relationship exists between flexible work schedule and employee engagement since (F -Statistics = 730.9437, R -Squared = 0.879, $P > 0.05$). Based on the findings, the study concluded that there exists a strong significant positive relationship between the hybrid work model and employee performance of the selected tertiary institutions in South-South, Nigeria. Sequel to the conclusion, the study recommended that the studied tertiary institutions need to strive towards inculcating the hybrid work model methodology in their operations as it could influence the performance level of their employees and by extension encourage employee engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Tertiary institutions all over the world are recognised for their pivotal contributions to nation-building and overall development. These institutions include universities, colleges, and other higher education institutions, which play a crucial role in the advancement of both individuals and society as a whole. By offering a wide range of academic programs and opportunities for personal growth, these institutions empower individuals to become productive members of society and contribute to the economic and social development of their communities (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018).

It is, however, important to note that the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly altered the conventional working method of organisations as restrictions of movement to save lives were imposed by many governments all over the globe. Tertiary institutions, like many other organisations, have had to adapt to the changing work landscape and explore the potential benefits and

challenges of this new approach (Adegba, Ogundeji & Omogoroye, 2022). Thus, the contemporary workplace has undergone a substantial transformation in recent years, with the emergence of the hybrid work model as a prominent trend. In the context of tertiary institutions in the South-South region of Nigeria, the implementation of the hybrid work model has become increasingly relevant. Understanding the impact of the hybrid work model on employee performance is crucial for these institutions to develop effective strategies and policies that support their workforce and enhance organisational outcomes.

The hybrid model blends remote and in-office work, allowing employees to work from home or other locations for a portion of their work schedule while maintaining a physical presence in the office (Gartner, 2021). It has gained widespread adoption and has proven to contribute towards organisational productivity (Wang, et

al, 2023). With the implementation of a hybrid work model in teaching and learning, teachers in tertiary institutions can work from anywhere they are irrespective of the distance occasioned by family responsibility, vacation leave, and other official trips (Asgari, Rajesh & Xia, 2022). No wonder the hybrid model has been variously described as 'telecommuting', 'telework', 'remote work', 'home-based work', 'flexible work', 'distance work', 'multi-locational work', 'mobile work', and even online work or 'crowd work' (Allen, Golden & Shockley, 2015). It implies a shift from a purely face-to-face classroom method to the adoption of method where the teacher and learner are physically apart during course delivery, thus teachers and learners from different nations can teach and study in educational institutions located outside their countries (Kentnor, 2015).

Extant literature has explored the implications of the hybrid work model on various aspects of organisational performance, including employee productivity, engagement, and well-being (Rupietta & Beckmann, 2018). Nevertheless, most institutions in South-South, Nigeria have not embraced the hybrid work model. This gives credence to further examination of the hybrid work model as it relates to tertiary institutions in South-South, Nigeria. Hence, there is a need for more comprehensive research that specifically examines the relationship of the hybrid work model with the performance of tertiary institutions in the South-South region of Nigeria. Therefore, the broad objective of this study is to examine the relationship between the hybrid work model and employee performance of selected tertiary institutions in South-South Nigeria. Specifically, this study seeks to examine the relationship between flexible work schedules and employee engagement.

Conceptual Review

Hybrid Work Model

The hybrid work model is the ability of employees to make decisions determining when, where, and how long they engage in tasks relevant to their jobs (Bal & De-Lange, 2014). It refers to the combination of face-to-face classroom instruction and an online environment (Doering, 2016). With the hybrid work model, the workplace is no longer within the four walls of an institution rather it is an ecosystem of employees working from home, in the school, and anywhere when occasion demands (Cook, Mor, & Santos, 2020). Further, the hybrid work model offers employees the autonomy to choose to work wherever and however, they are most productive, which entails some employees working in person in the organisation while some work through the Internet from either their homes or elsewhere convenient for them (Cook, et al 2020). In the views of Snart (2020), a hybrid work model is defined as a learning situation in which students are participating in both in-person and online teaching simultaneously. The model entails flexibility in the workplace of an organisation in terms of the situation, place, and time, where the work is done either partly from the employer's premises or partly from home or elsewhere with the help of digital tools and platforms as a medium for work, communication, and cooperation (Vartiainen & Vanharanta, 2023).

Employee Performance

The effective management of employees' performance contribute to organisational success. Employee performance is defined as the manner in which employees complete their assigned work and perform required responsibilities (Omar, 2016). Organisations are facing increased competition due to globalisation and external environmental factors. Every organisation has the responsibility to enhance the performance of their employees because of its importance in achieving ultimate goals (Nassazi, 2017). Performance by an employee enhances the reputation of the employee hence enhancing him/her in developing his/her career (McQuerrey, 2014).

The productive performance of employees within an organisation centers on the motivational packages (rewards) in place and the motivation is in different ways to get maximum output and productivity. There are two primary purposes of goal setting that are expected from employees in their performance; one is to improve the individual's behavior, and the second is to motivate them at a high level further that they perform well with effectiveness. Stangrecka and Iddagoda (2020) observed that employee job performance is a consequence of employee engagement.

Flexible Work Schedule

A Flexible work schedule is one in which employees, to some extent, work from multiple places or at non-standard hours (Clarke, 2017). It is an arrangement in which employees can choose when to begin and end work-related activities in an organisation (Waiganjo & Kihoro, 2016). Flexible work arrangements ensure that employees and managers can fulfill their social, economic, and religious obligations while still performing their jobs effectively for their employer(s) (Nwabali, 2018). Simply put, the ability of employees to choose when, where, and how long they participate in duties connected to their jobs is referred to as flexibility in the workplace (Bal, et al, 2014).

Thus, the ability of employees to modify when, where, and how long they spend on tasks connected to their jobs is known as workplace flexibility (Rau & Hyland, 2018). Also, the government encourages numerous institutions to provide their staff with flexible working arrangements, such as flexible or remote locations and part-time employment opportunities as a result, institutions have started providing employees with flexible working arrangements (Daan, 2018). Flexible work schedule is called for as organisations nowadays comprise of women, single-parent families, and those responsible for caring for older adults in the workplace (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky & Prottas, 2017). It therefore helps in controlling employees on how they can operate under flexible working conditions to lessen the consequences of job stress on their work (Halpern, 2015).

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement describes the emotional and cognitive positive relationship between an employee and an organisation

toward the output of the organisation (Shuck & Wollard, 2019). Kahn, 2020 sees employee engagement as the harnessing of organisational members' talents to their work roles. In engagement, people employed express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances". Employee engagement can also be seen as the extent to which people enjoy and believe in what they do, and feel valued by doing it. Similarly, employee engagement is the extent to which an employee gets involved in the job and the organisation cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally (Iddagoda, Opatha & Gunawardana, 2016). Engaged employees make an extra effort to achieve organisational goals and they talk positively about the organisation when they move with society (Aon, 2018). Another main consequence of employee engagement is organisational performance, which has also been the view of Iddagoda and Gunawardana (2017). This implies that the high level of employee engagement increases the performance of the organisation and acts as a retention strategy.

Theoretical Framework

The study anchors on the Job Demand Resource (JD-R) Theory. This theory was proposed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) which posits that job demands like workload, time pressure and job resources like autonomy, social support can affect employee job engagement and performance. It provides for a more complete and comprehensive understanding of employee well-being and performance. Again, JD-R theory is a unifying job design theory that integrates various job stress and motivational perspectives. The theory explains how job demands and resources influence job performance through employee well-being, proactiveness as well as reactive work behaviors to influence job demands and resources.

This theory is relevant to this study because when an interesting job feature or characteristic like a flexible work schedule, autonomous and social support is introduced by the management of the focused tertiary institution, it could by extension impact employee performance and engagement.

Empirical Review

Krajčík, Dušana and Matúš (2023) worked on the Hybrid Work Model, an approach to Work-Life Flexibility in a Changing Environment in Switzerland. A quantitative research methodology was used and 360 randomly selected respondents participated in this study. Self-administered copies of the questionnaire were administered to respondents drawn from academic administrators in the country. The data collected was analyzed using SPSS version 22.0. The results of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between the hybrid work model and employee performance.

Okon (2022) examined hybrid work models for professional development in teacher education at the University of Calabar, Nigeria. All the lecturers (742) and students (2,046) of the three Faculties of Education, University of Calabar constituted the population of the study (2,788) from where a sample size of 500 (140 lecturers and 360 students) was selected. Multiple sampling methods were adopted in selecting the sample, including stratified, simple random, and purposive sampling methods. A 15-item

researcher-made questionnaire was used to elicit data from respondents. It was a survey research study and descriptive statistics (frequency counts, weighted means, standard deviation, and percentages were adopted for data analysis. A mean score of 2.00 formed the significant/acceptance level. It was found that a hybrid work model in learning environments positively impacts the development and performance of workers in the school.

Ifeoma (2019) studied flexible work arrangements and employee performance of selected commercial banks in Anambra State. A descriptive survey design was adopted. The sample size was 186 respondents drawn from the target population of 348 respondents using the Taro Yamani formula. Data were collected by use of a structured questionnaire. Construct and content validity was used to validate the instrument while Cronbach's alpha (α) statistical method was used to test the reliability of the instrument. Data was analysed by the use of descriptive statistics while Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypotheses. The work was anchored on the work/family border theory. The result revealed a significant and statistical relationship between job sharing and employee commitment in the studied banking sector and a positive and significant relationship between flexi-time and employee satisfaction in the studied banking sector. The study concluded that Flexible work arrangement reduces work stress, improve mental and physical stability, and enhance work efficiency and effectiveness.

Mungania, Waiganjo and Kihoro (2016) examined the influence of workplace flexibility on employee performance in the Banking Industry in Kenya. This study adopted a cross-sectional survey. A cross-sectional approach enhances the credence of results by providing conclusions on data at a given point in time. 43 banks participated in the study. Primary data was collected using a questionnaire that had both structured and unstructured questions. The researcher also used descriptive statistics including frequency distribution tables, percentages, and measures of central tendency such as mean. In addition to this advanced statistical techniques were also considered particularly measures of variations such as standard deviation and others like regression analysis to establish relationships among variables. The study is anchored on expectancy theory. The study found workplace flexibility influences employee performance.

Kariuki and Makori (2015) examined the relationship between workplace changes and employee performance in private Universities in Western Kenya. This study was anchored on Lewin's theory of Change Management, the Job Characteristics model, and Goal Setting theory. This study employed a correlational research design. The target population was 1440 faculty and staff members from four selected Universities. Techniques of stratified random sampling were used in the study. The sample consisted of 313 workers from various departments. Respondents were given copies of the questionnaire to complete to collect data. Excel and SPSS tools were used in the data analysis. Frequency tables and charts were used to present the data. The findings revealed that workplace changes have a significant relationship with employee morale.

Methodology

A survey research design was adopted to enable observation of the sample subjects without manipulating them. The population consist of University of Benin (1,454), University of Port-Harcourt (1,238), and University of Uyo (975). These give a total population of 3,667. The Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling technique was used to obtain a sample size of 348, while Bowley's (1926) allocation formula was used to ascertain the sample size in each University. The samples include:

University of Benin = 138.

University of Port-Harcourt = 118.

University of Uyo = 92.

The data collection tool employed was a Likert-style questionnaire. An on-the-spot method of data collection was employed with the aid of research assistants. Both content and face validity tests were employed. A Cronbach's Alpha score of the reliability statistics was 0.88. Descriptive statistics (Mean) was used to analyse the research questions, while regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses using E-View version 10. With a five-point Likert scale, 2.5 (acceptance) was used as a benchmark.

Research Question

What is the relationship between flexible work schedules and employee engagement?

Table 1: Questionnaire Items

No	Questionnaire Items for Independent Variable(Hybrid Work Model)	Questionnaire Items for Dependent Variable(Employee Performance)				
		SA	A	UD	D	SD
	Flexible Work Schedule					
1.	There is a flexible work arrangement in my institution					
2.	There is a part-time employment opportunity in my institution.					
3.	The staff of my institution needs to carry out their work on campus and off campus.					
	Questionnaire Item for Dependent Variable(Employee Performance)					
	Employee Engagement					
4.	There is low employee turnover intention in my university.					
5.	There is flexibility in work arrangement which promotes workers' retention.					
6.	There is a high level of cooperation in my university					

Table 2: Flexible Work Schedule Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1	348	1.00	5.00	3.0086	1.16996
Q2	348	1.00	5.00	3.1236	1.07859
Q3	348	1.00	5.00	3.2615	1.13778
Valid N (listwise)	348				

The mean scores of the responses from the questions relating to flexible work schedules for the three studied tertiary institutions are >2.5. This makes the responses acceptable for the study.

Table 3: Employee Engagement Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q4	348	1.00	5.00	3.0316	1.18425
Q5	348	1.00	5.00	3.1437	1.09072
Q6	348	1.00	5.00	3.3103	1.15197
Valid N (listwise)	348				

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The mean scores of the responses from the questions relating to employee engagement for the three studied tertiary institutions are >2.5. This makes the responses acceptable for the study.

Dependent Variable: EMP_ENG

Method: Least Squares

Date: 03/30/24 Time: 11:06

Sample: 1 348

Included observations: 348

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	1.085017	0.333512	3.253311	0.0013
FLEX_WORK	0.699913	0.025888	27.03597	0.0000
R-squared	0.878720	Mean dependent var		10.02299
Adjusted R-squared	0.877792	S.D. dependent var		1.446267
S.E. of regression	0.820950	Akaike info criterion		2.449022
Sum squared resid	233.1899	Schwarz criterion		2.471161
Log likelihood	-424.1298	Hannan-Quinn criter.		2.457836
F-statistic	730.9437	Durbin-Watson stat		1.904755
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000000			

The results revealed that flexible work schedule has a significant relationship with employee engagement in the three studied tertiary institutions ($\beta = 1.09$, t -statistics = 3.25, $p < 0.05$). Also, a flexible work schedule is a predictor of employee engagement (F -statistics = 730.9437; R -squared = 0.879; $p < 0.05$). The predictor variable single-handedly explained 87.9% of the variance in employee retention, while the remaining 12.1% could be due to the effect of the extraneous variables. The F -Statistic value reveals that the regression model as a whole is useful for this study. The Durbin-Watson value of 1.9 reveals that there is no first-order serial correlation.

Testing of Hypothesis

H_0 : There is no significant positive relationship between flexible work schedule and employee engagement.

H_1 : There is a significant positive relationship between flexible work schedule and employee engagement

Discussion of Finding

Findings obtained from the test of the hypothesis reveal that there is a strong positive relationship between flexible work schedules and employee engagement. This corroborates the study by Krajcık, Dušana and Matúš (2023) which revealed that there is a significant relationship between the hybrid work model and employee performance. The result also supports the finding by Kariuki and Makori (2015) who examined the relationship between workplace changes and employee performance in private Universities in

Western Kenya. The finding of the study disclosed that there is a strong positive relationship between the hybrid work model and employee performance. The study of Okon (2022) who studied hybrid work models for professional development in teachers' education at the University of Calabar, Nigeria is also in tandem with findings obtained from a test of the formulated hypothesis. The finding of the study reveals that a strong positive relationship exists between the hybrid work model and employee performance.

Summary of finding

There is a strong positive relationship between flexible work schedule and employee engagement since the β value=1.09; t-statistics = 3.25; F-statistics = 730.9437; $p > 0.05$, which shows that the result is statistically significant.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that a strong positive relationship exists between the hybrid work model and employee performance of selected tertiary institutions in South-South Nigeria. Specifically, the study resolves that a strong positive relationship exists between flexible work schedules and employee engagement in the study area.

Recommendation

The studied tertiary institutions in South-South Nigeria need to encourage and establish flexible work schedules as this will lessen job stress and by extension lead to employee engagement.

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