

The Impact of Flexible Work Model on Employee's Work Life Balance in an Emerging Economy

Ibukun Olorunisola Kolawole PhD & Adekunle Emmanuel Ibrinke

Department of Industrial Relations & Human Resource Management, Lagos State University, Ojo, Nigeria

Abstract: Work life balance is becoming an important factor in the workforce choice of employer. The employee would like the opportunity to arrange their working time themselves and fit them in flexibility with current circumstance. The paper investigates the impact of flexible work model on the work life balance of workforce in Nigeria. The study draws its samples from a population of workforce within the banking sector. A sample of 50 respondents was selected using purposive sampling. Copies of questionnaires were administered to these respondents from which findings were deduced and analyzed using multiple regression tool of analysis. The study finds out that flexible work model has a significant impact on work life balance in Nigeria. This means that increase in one will lead to increase in the other. The study therefore concludes that employees are emotional being that needs the opportunity to balance their emotional feeling between family and work. The study recommends therefore that social securities that are necessities for human survival and decent living should be provided by the government so that the flexible work model can have a good moral soil to have a positive impact.

Keywords: flexible work model, work life balance, emerging economy

I. INTRODUCTION

The world is experiencing such a global change that is putting every nation on their toes towards development. These global changes have equally necessitated changes in the various industries in emerging economies like Nigeria. Industries are looking for the method of work to meet the current global challenges and increase their profit margin. With this goal in mind the flexible work model is becoming thriving field of study for researchers such as Johnson, 2006, Eleftherios, 2016, Jan, Stephen & Simone, 2013, and Klindzik & Maric, 2017.

The general assumption is that flexible work arrangement enables an organization to adapt it workforce to changes in the working environment which is mainly based on Atkinson's (1984) flexible firm model. (Jan et al, 2013)

For many employees today both male and female lives are becoming more consumed with a host of family and other personal responsibilities and interests in addition to demands of the workplace (Grantol-Vallore & Donaldson, 2001). There is therefore a perceived imbalance between the demands of current lives and people's abilities to adequately cope with them and this may lead to an experience of stress (World of Work Report, 2011). In a society filled with conflicting responsibilities and commitments, 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.

This study therefore seeks to examine the emerging issues in the relationship between work flexibility arrangements and employee work life. It shall examine the role of some of the dimensions of FWAs such as work shift, and flexi work hour in enhancing employee work life balance. Flexible working relates, to an organizations working arrangement in terms of working time, working location and pattern of work directed to eliminate and reduce employee burnout experience (Lewis, 2003).

Statement of Problem

Many studies have been done in investigating the psychological effect of FWM on employees studies such as Docherty, Forslin, Shan & Kira 2002, Strazdi, D'souza, Lim, Broom & Rodgers, 2004 as cited in Jan et al 2013 used burnout, job stress, mental ill health, work family conflict and job satisfaction as their indicators for their studies. These studies were conducted among respondents from developed economies. It is thus a challenge for this study to carry out similar study investigation among respondents from an emerging or developing economy.

The question is does flexible workers experience guarantee a better work life balance or the otherwise in emerging economy like Nigeria is a problem the paper is aim at juxtaposing.

Objective of the Study

The study is aimed at investigating:

1. The impact of flexible working hours on employees' family life
2. The impact of flexible working hours on employees' burnout

Research Questions

- i. What is the relationship between flexible working hours and employee's family life?
- ii. How does flexible working hours impact on employee's burnout?

Research Hypothesis

H1: Flexible working hours have a significant impact on employee's family life.

H2: Flexible working hours have a significant impact on employee's burnout.

Scope and Limitations of Study

The study examines employees within the banking, manufacturing and educational sector in Nigeria. This research was carried out during the corona epidemic, hence there were difficulties reaching the respondents but the email, phone calls and other mobile means of texting such as (**WhatsApp**) were very useful.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many literature have been written on the issue of flexible work arrangement and its effect on work life balance. But it is of interest to note here that most of these studies were carried out in the western and developed economies, little studies have been done in emerging economies like that of Nigeria.

Flexible Work Model/Arrangement

The term flexible work model has been referred to with diverse nomenclature in different literature. For instance Hills, Grzywacz, Allen, Blanchard, Matz-Costa, Shulkin And Pitt-Catsouphes (2008) refers to this concept as workplace flexibility. Hills et al (2008) conceptualize this term in two distinct ways; first they refer to it in terms of organizational perspective, which to them explains flexibility that the organization only has secondary regards to the workers. (Hills et al, 2008). The organization's perspective conceives workplace flexibility as the amount to which organizational features incorporate a level of flexibility, that allows the organization to adapt to changes in their environment. (Dastmalchian & Blyton, 2001 as cited in Hill et al, 2008).

The second perspective according to Hill et al, 2008, is the work perspective. This primarily emphasizes individual agency in the context of organizational culture and structure. The perspective implicitly or explicitly defines the concept as the degree to which workers are able to make choices to arrange core aspects of their professional lives, particularly regarding where, when and for how long work is performed. (The Center on Aging & Work at Boston, 2007 as cited in Hill et al, 2008). The major thrust of this perspective is that workers are human resource, whole persons with essential life needs outside of work and when individuals perceive that they are better able to meet their needs by exercising flexibility, they will be more motivated, loyal and engaged to work. (Hill et al, 2008).

Galinsky, Bond and Hill (2004) as cited in Hill et al (2008) found out that when organizations facilitate flexibility, workers can better meet all their needs on and off the job and their organization ultimately benefits.

This study therefore places its emphasis on the **work perspective** of the flexible work model/ arrangement.

Researchers like, Susanna and Rashad (2014) Chang, (2009) and Posner, (2011) have discussed three broad categories of flexible work model. These include:

- i. Flexibility in scheduling: time flexibility
- ii. Flexibility in location: working from home
- iii. Flexibility in length of work: part time work (Susanna et al, 2014)

While each of the arrangement could be used individually, they are frequently combined to complement each other. (Chang, 2009 as cited in Susanna et al, 2014)

Work Life Balance

The concept of work life balance is in recent times gaining much attention as a result of its relevance and importance to all employees despite their relationship status, family size and number of children. (Susanna et al, 2014). Researchers such as Languagand Francis (2009) as cited in Susanna et al (2014) are of the opinion that lack of balance is an effect of conflict between work and life responsibilities. In another study carried out by Abendroth and Dulk on the support for the work life balance, they found out that emotional and instrumental support for employees during the work has a positive relationship with the work life balance satisfaction. (Abendroth and Dulk, 2011 as cited in Susanna et al, 2014).

Pine e Cunha and Rego simply put it that the successful accomplishment of life responsibilities that is family and parental roles inclusive, results in better work performance. While finding a balance in life and work responsibilities increase general life satisfaction. (Pine e Cunha & Rego, 2009 as cited in susanna et al, 2014)

The Atkinson Flexible Firm Model

Atkinson's (1984) Flexible Firm

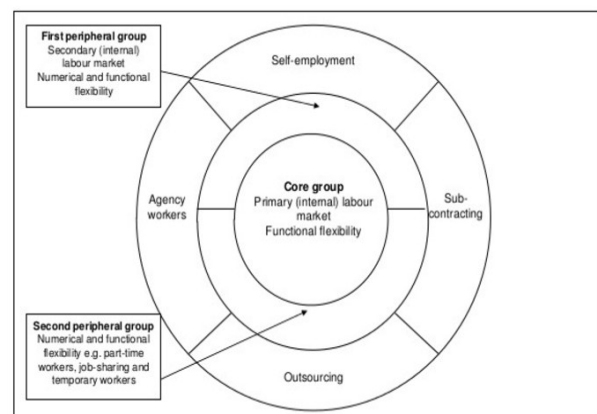


Figure 1: Diagram derived from the conversation.com

John Atkinson proposed the flexible firm model of the institute of manpower studies in 1984. This model mainly believes majorly that the difference between a successful organization and a rigid dysfunctional organization is being proactive and decisive than reactionary in terms of change in the business environment. It also believes that the workforce can be driven and designed to meet business needs within a competitive market. To add with, it advocates the integration of flexible conditions within an organization functional operation in order to meet the requirement of the competitive market which results in the achievement of its goals.

The model divided organization employees into two distinct groups.

- a. The core group
- b. The peripheral group

The core group: consists of major term primary workers and internal workers who are important to the process of the organization, performance flexible and difficult to replace due to high-level of skill, knowledge and experience.

The peripheral group: this includes secondary workers who are often less skilled and less experienced. The number of people in this group are highly variable as their skills are easily available in the labour market. The model further sub divided this group into:

- i. First peripheral group; which consist of afore mentioned low skilled often part-time and flexible workers.
- ii. Second peripheral group; this is made up of large agency staff, outsourcing and sub-contractors. These individuals who consistently work and functions such as cleaners, caterers, etc. Though they are not directly employees to the organization but are important to its daily works.

The model further identified three different forms of flexibility within an organization. This includes:

Functional flexibility:

This is related with high skill level of a lot of different tasks as performed by the core group of workers. It allows management to relocate core workers between multiple workforces and task. When developing functional flexibility within the organisation generally requires increased training, more flexible working hours and re-evaluation of payment/value to the company.

Numerical flexibility:

This applies generally to the peripheral workforce. It is related to the amount of low skilled workers available in the labour market. This means that employers can match labour demands with the number of employees under contracts at the company. This can be achieved through the flexible employment methods such as short-term contract, outsourcing, temporary workers and other means.

Financial flexibility:

This is the capacity of organizations to adjust the pay for labour in line with supply and demand of employees within the company which involves compensation. It refers to the compensation granted to individuals upon the termination of their contract. Financial flexibility is related to and supportive of numerical and functional flexibility.

Atkinson further outlined two dimensions in which flexibility can be applied.

1. Flexibility in employment

This is a concept in view to the labour market. Since perhaps the 1960s, employers have found new and innovative ways to make the size and composition of their work-force far more flexible. These include part-time, zero-hours contract, sub-contracting, remote workers and many more.

2. Flexibility in work

This refers to the flexibility within the organization. It can be used in discussion of work structure such as group-work and flexible working times and also to the implementation of new technologies which allow for a more flexible production process. These technologies and work structure allows employees to respond quickly to market changes within the composition of their work force. (An extract from business ball.com)

The model therefore assumes to be much applicable in Nigerian labour market, especially in its identification of employment trends like outsourcing, contract staffing which are current trend in the Nigerian labour market.

III. METHODOLOGY

The design adopted in carrying out this study is the survey method which focused on the population of a carefully selected sample in relation to identified variables and desired characteristic of the entire population. The major objective of this study is to investigate the impact of flexible work model/arrangement on employees' work life balance. The study selects its respondents of 50 employees involve in flexible work from a vast population of employees in the banking sector. The study adopts primary method of data collection; as it administers questionnaire to the respondents. The questionnaire was a multiple choice type and 3 Likert scales was used as the rating scale. The study adopts multiple regression test analysis to test its hypothesis.

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDING

The researchers approach both male and female employees but streamline to employees with family responsibility so as to get the opinions of employees that are very much involved in this work and family life conflict.

50% of the respondents are male while 50% are females. 36% of the respondents are between the ages of 21-30, 40% are between the ages of 31-40 and 24% of the respondents are

between the ages of 41-50..30% of the respondents are low level employees, 46% are middle level and 24% are senior level employees. 80% of the respondents are married while 12% are divorced.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
You determine how long a task takes to be completed	50	1	3	130	2.60	.808
Job time is flexible	50	1	1	50	1.00	.000
I swap work time with my colleague	50	1	3	60	1.20	.606
You get notice to work for extended period of time	50	1	3	61	1.22	.582
You get paid for extra time spent on the job	50	1	3	83	1.66	.848
My job gives me enough time for my kids	50	1	3	108	2.16	.997
I am able to attend social functions with my family	50	1	3	88	1.76	.938
My family complain of my busy work schedule	49	1	3	70	1.43	.736
My job has threatened my marriage	50	1	3	124	2.48	.886
I earn enough to meet my family needs	50	1	3	109	2.18	.962
I get stressed out after work	50	1	1	50	1.00	.000
I often get home too tired from work	50	1	3	76	1.52	.789
Work stress affect my sexual performance	50	1	3	88	1.76	.822
I am too tired to be productive for any other activity after work	50	1	3	88	1.76	.797
Work stress affects me emotionally	50	1	3	118	2.36	.749
Valid N (list wise)	49					

Test of Hypothesis

H1: Flexible working hours has a significant impact on employee's family life.

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Flexible work hour	1.5360	.41687	50
FamilyLife	2.0060	.38672	50

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.072 ^a	.005	-.016	.42010	.005	.250	1	48	.619

a. Predictors: (Constant), Burnoutm ,

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.704	.293		2.401	.020
	Family life	.415	.144	.385	2.888	.006

a. Dependent Variable: Flexible Work Hour

From the above table, the value of significance is = .006 which is < 0.5. therefore the hypothesis 1 that states that Flexible working hours has a significant impact on employee's family life is therefore accepted. The R square = .148 which shows that the level of impact FWH has on family life is positive and very strong. It therefore connotes that the more flexible work becomes the balance the employees' family life becomes.

The finding corroborates Grywacz and Bass (2003); Clark and Kirchmeyer (2000); Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), who reported that employees' perception of flexible in working period, flexible working hours, harmonious labour management relations as well as flexibility in work arrangement in an organization tends to provide employees' work-life balance in the organisation.

H2: Flexible working hours have a significant impact on employee's burnout.

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Flexible Working Hour	1.5360	.41687	50
Burnout	1.6800	.31558	50

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.385 ^a	.148	.130	.38877	.148	8.339	1	48	.006

a. Predictors: (Constant), Family Life

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.696	.325		5.218	.000
	Burnout	-.095	.190	-.072	-.500	.619

a. Dependent Variable: Flexible Working Hours

The above table shows that the value of significance which is the p value= .619 which >0.5. thus the second hypothesis that state that **flexible working hours has a significant impact on employee’s burnout** is thereby rejected as the statistics from the data shows that flexible working hours has no significant impact on employees’ burnout. This further means that we cannot attribute employee’s burnout to FWM. We will want to suggest at this point that if flexible work arrangement doesn’t bring about burnout, then probably the rigid work arrangement could have a significant impact on employees’ burnout.

The above finding is in consonance with findings of Mohan, Prabha and Mohanraj (2010) who found out that there exists a significant positive relationship between flexible work arrangement an work life balance. Their study also reveals that flexible work has a positive significant relationship with employee’s performance. Thus when work is flexible it improves employees’ work life which will also improve employees’ performance which is of benefit to the employers.

V. CONCLUSION

The money earned is of no use if there is no time to spend them with the family. Employees are emotional being who have familial attachment. It is not rational for work to hamper these affections which most times makes the employee unstable and unproductive.

For the few that are involves in flexible work in Nigeria it ensures a better work life balance and increased performance. But still vast majority still desire the more permanent job for the main reason that they can be laid off anytime. Jobs in Nigeria that are flexible do not have any form of security. And workers in this form of employment don’t enjoy some benefit that more permanent workers enjoy.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

Therefore, it should be the aim of every employer to adopt a form of employment that will bring about a work life balance; which the flexible work arrangement has offered to be. Based on the research findings, the study will be incomplete without the following recommendations:

1. Management should encourage and give flexible working practice the priority it deserves and be willing to carry it out with new ideas.
2. Organisations should make provisions for employees’ to enjoy their social and family life even while working through the arrangement of work in the workplace.
3. Organisations should carefully adopt all kinds of policies for employees to support the balance relationship between social life and work. By doing this, employees will feel the altruistic atmosphere of organisation with little or no signs of burnout.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Abendroth. A. K. & Den Dulk. L. (2011) Support for the Work-Life Balance in Europe:The Impact of State, Workplace, and Family Support on Work-Life Balance Satisfaction, Work, Employment, and Society, Vol. 25, No.2,2011,pp.234256.http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0950017011398892
- [2]. Chung. H. (2009) “Flexibility for Whom? Working Time Flexibility Practices of European Companies,” Tilburg University, Tilburg, 2009.
- [3]. Dastmalchian A, &Blyton, P. (2001). Workplace flexibility and the changing nature of work: An introduction. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 18(1), 14
- [4]. Dettmers, J, Kaiser, S., &Fietze, S. (2013). Theory and Practice of Flexible Work: Organizational and Individual Perspectives: Introduction to the Special Issue. *Management Revue*, 24(3), 155-161
- [5]. Docherty, P., Forslin, J., Shani, A.B., &Kira, M. (2002). Emerging work systems: From intensive to sustainable. In Docherty, P. (Eds.), *Creating sustainable work systems. merging perspectives and practice* (pp. 3-14). London: Routledge.
- [6]. EleftheriosGiovanis (2016), flexible employment arrangement and workplace performance in Great Britain. (Working paper) www.preprints.org
- [7]. Galinsky, E, Bond, J. T., & Hill, E. J. (2004).When work works: A status report on workplace flexibility. Who has it? Who wants it? What difference does it make? New York: Families and Work Institute.
- [8]. Hill J.E, Grywaez J.G, Allen.S, Blanchard. V.L, Matz-Costa C, Shulkin.S& Pitt-Catsoupes.M, (2008), *journal of community, work and family*.Vol 11, No2, pg 149-163.
- [9]. Johnsson, D. (2006). Flexibility, stability and related concepts.In Furaker B, Hakansson K, & Karlsson, J. (Eds.), *Flexibility and stability in working life*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- [10]. Klindzic.M &Maric.M (2017); flexible work arrangement and organizational performance-the difference between employee and employer driven practices.*Journal for general issues*.
- [11]. Lingard H &Francis. V. (2009) *Managing Work-Life Balance in Construction*, Spon Press, New York, 2009.
- [12]. Mohan M, ProbhaN Mohanraj.P (2010), work life balance through flexi work arrangements; empirical study on bank employees *International journal of management*Vol 1, No 2, pp 53-61
- [13]. Pina e Cunha. M&Rego. A. (2009). Do the Opportunities for Learning and PersonalDevelopment Lead to Happiness? It

depends on Work-Family Conciliation, *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, Vol.14, No. 3, 2009, pp. 334-348. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0014248>

- [14]. Possema, D. & Plantinga, J. (2011). Access to Flexible Work Arrangements, Working-Time Fit and Job Satisfaction," Tjalling C. Koopmans Research Institute, Utrecht.
- [15]. Strazdins, L., D'Souza, R.M., Lim, L., Broom, D.H., & Rodgers, B. (2004). Job strain, job security, and health: Rethinking the relationship. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 9, 443-475.
- [16]. Susana S & Rashad, Y. (2014), Impact of flexible working hours on work life balance. *American journal of industrial and business management* Vol 4, pg 20-23