
WORKTIME FLEXIBILITY AND COMMITMENT OF EMPLOYEES OF BREWING FIRMS IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Flexible work arrangements have become vital to managing business operation efficiently. Sadly, most firms in developing economies are lagging in the implementation of workplace flexibility, and are facing challenges of reduced employee commitment and performance. With a view to examining the nexus between flexible work arrangements and employee commitment in Nigeria and making requisite recommendations therefore, this examen probed the correlation between worktime flexibility and commitment of employees of brewing firms in South-South Nigeria. The study was anchored on job enrichment theory. A correlational research design was adopted in the study. A structured questionnaire was utilized to collect primary data from 299 respondents that constituted the sample size of the study. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis formulated for the study. The study found that there is a significant positive correlation between worktime flexibility and employee commitment of brewing firms in South-South Nigeria. Thus, the study concluded that a strong positive and statistically significant correlation exists between worktime flexibility and employee commitment, and recommends that management of brewing firms in South-South Nigeria that seek to possess a committed workforce should strive to create flexible workplaces, including flexible work times and schedules.

Keywords: Brewing firms, employee commitment, time flexibility, workplace flexibility

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's brewing industry is considerably viable and prominent. Thus, increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the industry requires an understanding of how workplace flexibility affects worker commitment and company performance (Voydanoff, 2014; Voydanoff, 2014). Essentially, workplace flexibility entails providing employees (individually or collectively) with options and autonomy in managing their work schedules, location, and tasks. Collective flexibility mean the collective right of workers to customize their work schedule, place, workload, boundaries, connectivity, and employment mode with their employer and other stakeholders to benefit employers, employees, and society (Kossek & Kelliher, 2022). Collective flexibility provides workers the opportunities to work from a desired and comfortable location. It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic has placed workplace flexibility in the spotlight.

Employees that are given the opportunity to work from outside the organization will be committed to work and engage in organizational activities effectively (Nwankwoala, 2022), as workplace flexibility positively affects employee performance in various industries and contexts. Allen et al. (2018) found that employees with access to flexible work arrangements demonstrates higher job satisfaction, work

engagement and high performance. Also, Bloom et al. (2019) underscored workplace flexibility to increase productivity and reduce absenteeism. These findings highlight the potential benefits of workplace flexibility for employee performance.

Consequently, workplace flexibility in terms of time, schedules, location, hours is vital to managing business operations efficiently and improving employee performance (Chen & Fulmer 2017). Ultimately, successful organizations depend on committed employees to achieve strategic aims and keep their competitive advantage (Dessler, 2014). Employee commitment is a feeling of dedication to one's organization, willingness to work hard for the employer, and intent to remain with the organization (Udu & Ameh, 2016).

Indicators of a committed employee include lack of interest in job offers elsewhere, willingness to accept responsibility, expression of job satisfaction, willingness and ability to make useful contributions, eagerness to work with less supervision and not given to unnecessary excuses (Iqra & Yahya, 2013). A high level of employee retention indicates a high level of commitment and vice-versa (Igbaekemen & Idowu, 2014). Employers everywhere including government agencies in developed countries that may not have put in place such modalities to offer flexible scheduling options, have been suddenly forced to implement flexible work options (Jacob et al., 2018). This is because, workplace flexibility has become a strong device for employee retention and engagement (Ugargal & Patrick, 2018).

Sadly however, the relationship between workplace flexibility in and employee commitment within brewing firms in South-South Nigeria remains largely unexplored. It can be observed that managers of brewing firms in South-South Nigeria have not fully embraced the concept of workplace flexibility, and are facing challenges associated with employee commitment.

Expectedly, the absence of a flexible work schedule could make some employees inactive. This is worrisome because lack of employee participation contributes to decreased performance of brewing firms. The implication is that attracting innovative-minded employees in a non-flexible workplace may be an uphill task. Further, Nigerian scholars like Mgbemena et al. (2022) examined workplace flexibility and employee performance of plastic manufacturing firms in Anambra State and found positive effect of flexible work environment on performance of employees.

An inflexible workplace may experience poor performance. Though most managers of Nigerian businesses have failed to fully embrace flexible work schedules, the experience of most businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic calls for a rethink. The foregoing gives credence to an examination of the relationship between workplace flexibility (a specific focus flexibility time) and employee commitment in brewing Firms in South-South Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Worktime Flexibility

Worktime flexibility is a scheduling program for full-time employees that allows them to choose their starting and finishing time daily, provided they complete a stipulated number of hours to start and/or end the work day earlier (or later) than usual (Kelly & Kalev, 2016). It has been linked to higher job satisfaction, increased organizational commitment, and reduced turnover intentions (Hill et al., 2019). Worktime flexibility enables employees to better balance their work and personal responsibilities, leading to increased satisfaction, reduced work-family conflict, and improved overall well-being (Grawitch et al., 2019).

Studies demonstrate that worktime flexibility positively impacts employee productivity, performance, and creativity (Golden et al., 2021). Employees often report increased focus, reduced interruptions, and

improved job performance when given control over their work schedules (Mensah, 2018; Kallenberg, 2016). Flexible time enable employees to vary their working hours within agreed parameters, provided they attend during a 'core' time which has potential benefits that gives employee more control over scheduling personal responsibilities on either end of the work day (Cole, 2015).

Worktime flexibility allow employees some degree of choice regarding how total weekly hours are distributed to manage non-work demands which includes flextime, compressed workweeks, flexible shifts, part-year, seasonal schedules, and flexible breaks during the workday. Dalcos and Daley (2014) posit that flexible work arrangement such as flex time allows employees to choose when, where and for how long they engage in work-related tasks, thus enhance engagement. An employee with a flextime schedule has alternative start and end times, but total weekly or daily hours worked are the same as those for other regular full-time employees. Flexible working hours not only contribute to improve the general atmosphere and human relations but it also enhances the pleasure of work (Abid & Barech, 2022).

Employee Commitment

Employee commitment is an indicator of employee performance (Abid & Barech, 2022; Smith & Bititc, 2017). It describes varying levels of employees' attachment to their organization (Ateke & Akani, 2018). Employee commitment is critical to organizational success (Quadri, 2022; Islami et al., 2018), and has been found to positively influence job satisfaction, work-life balance, and psychological well-being (Meyer et al., 2021; Eisenberger et al., 2019).

Commitment predispose employees positively toward their firm and informs a willingness to sustain an ongoing relationship with the firm (Ateke & Nwulu, 2019). Committed employees experience higher levels of job satisfaction and enhanced well-being. Employee commitment has also been linked to increased engagement and organizational citizenship behaviour, which refers to discretionary behaviours that benefit the organization but are not formally rewarded (Organ, 2018). This implies that committed employees are more likely to engage in helpful, cooperative, and proactive behaviours that contribute to the overall functioning of the organization.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on job enrichment theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), which assumes that the main approach to job enrichment is job characteristics that offer motivation, satisfaction, commitment, involvement, performance quality and withdrawal behaviours such as absenteeism and turnover are a function of three critical psychological states (meaningfulness, responsibility for outcomes, and knowledge of results) experienced by individuals (Grant & Shin, 2014).

Job enrichment theory proposes that jobs should be designed to possess certain characteristics that create conditions for high work motivation, satisfaction, performance involvement, and commitment. It identifies the tasks condition in which individual is predicted to prosper in their work. The theory gives management the insight that employee effectiveness can be enhanced by enriching the jobs with high levels of key characteristics and making sure those employees with appropriate personal qualities are assigned to these jobs (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Job enrichment theory is highly relevant to the study on worktime flexibility and employee commitment because when an interesting job feature like flexible work time is introduced by management, it could impact employee commitment. In essence, job enrichment theory suggests that enhancing the content and design of work tasks can lead to increased commitment. By incorporating job enrichment principles into the study, researchers can gain insights into how flexibility workplaces, which provide employees with more autonomy and control over their work, can contribute to the enrichment of their job roles.

Empirical Review

Chukwuemeka et al. (2022) examined flexible working and employee performance in plastic manufacturing industries in Anambra State, Nigeria, and found that indicators of flexible working (self-roistering and shift work) has positive significant effect on employee performance. Relatedly, Tapas (2021) examined workplace flexibility and employees' well-being. The objective of the study was to assess its prevalence and association with worker well-being in the United States. The study observed that changing one's schedule decreased the likelihood of job stress by 20% and increased the likelihood of job satisfaction by 62%.

Also, Idowu (2020) studied the role of flexible working hours' arrangement on employee job performance and retention in manufacturing industries in Agbara, Nigeria. The results obtained from the study suggests that flexible work-hour arrangements improved employee performance, increased retention of employees and reduced employee work stress. In addition,

Abid and Barech (2017) studied the Impact of flexible working hours on the employees' performance in Pakistan. The study observed that the demand for flexible working hours exists in Pakistan but there was need to generalize and increase awareness about flexible working hours among the different levels of management. Similarly, Sabiha and Daro (2017) reviewed the impact of flexible working hours on employee performance in Islamabad, Pakistan and revealed that existence of strong positive relationship between flexible working hour and employee performance.

In another study, Muhammad (2017) examined impact of time flexibility on employees' performance in government colleges of management sciences, Peshawar. The study revealed that time flexibility has significant relationship with employees commitment. More so, Mungania et al. (2016) examined influence of flexible workplace arrangement on employee's performance of the banking industry in Kenya. The study reported that flexible work arrangement has strong positive significant relationship with employee commitment of the banking industry in Kenya.

Literature has shown that time flexibility, including flexitime, compressed workweek, and remote work, offer numerous benefits to both employees and organizations. However, none of the studies reviewed in Nigeria and other countries examined worktime flexibility and commitment of employee of Brewing firms in South-South, Nigeria. To guide the study therefore, we formulated following null hypotheses:

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between worktime flexibility and employee commitment of brewing firms in South-South, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in South-South Nigeria. South-South Nigeria is one of the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria, comprising Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers States. Although the South-South represents only 5% of Nigerian territory, it contributes greatly to the Nigerian economy due to extensive oil and natural gas reserves. The region has a population of about 26 million people, around 12% of the total population of the country.

Port Harcourt and Benin City are the most populous cities in the South-South as well as the fourth and fifth most populous cities in Nigeria. The three (3) brewing firms in South-South, Nigeria are; Guinness Nigeria Plc., located at 49I kpoba Hill, Ikpoba Okha Benin City, Sab-Miller International Brewery, located at 186/187 Trans Amadi Industrial Layout Port Harcourt, Rivers State, and Champion Brewery located at Industrial layout Aka Offot, Uyo Akwa-Ibom State.

This study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study comprise 1,187 employees (Guinness Nigeria Plc. - 712; Sab-Miller International Brewery-246; Champion Brewery-229). The study determined a sample size of 299, using the Taro Yamane formula for sample size determination.

Bowley's (1926) allocation formula was used to determine copies of questionnaire to be distributed to each of the firms. 179 copies of questionnaire were randomly distributed to employees of Guinness Nigeria Plc., Benin plant; 62 copies were distributed to employees of Sab-Miller International Brewery, Port Harcourt; while 58 copies were randomly distributed to employees of Champion Brewery Aka Offot, Uyo.

A questionnaire was the data collection tool employed by the study. The questionnaire was designed on a five-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The validity of the instrument was carried out through a proper evaluation by some experts in the Measurement and Evaluation Department of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Anambra State; while its reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha reliability test. Table 1 and 2 show results of the test of reliability.

Table 1: reliability Statistics for Worktime flexibility

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.883	.883	5

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 shows Cronbach's alpha value of 0.883 which indicates that the instrument is reliable. Since the reliability value of $0.883 > 0.70$, it shows that the instrument is reliable.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics for Employee Performance

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.862	.862	5

Source: Field Survey, 2023

In Table 2 shows reliability coefficient of 0.862. This value is higher than the threshold of 0.70. The instrument is therefore considered reliable. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was employed to test the hypotheses formulated for the study, and was aided by SPSS version 20.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 3: Tabular representation of returned and unreturned questionnaires

Questionnaire	Number	%
Returned (Valid)	255	85.28
Unreturned (Unfilled)	44	14.72
Total no. of questionnaire administered	299	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3 shows that out of the 299 copies of the questionnaire that were distributed to the firms in the study area, 255 copies representing a percentage of 85.28 were returned valid while 44copies with a percentage of 14.72 were either not returned or properly filled. Based on the above, 255 copies of the questionnaire that were returned were used for the data analysis.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on Worktime Flexibility and Employee Commitment

Worktime Flexibility		SA	A	UN	SD	D	Total	Mean	Remark
1.	I am allowed to vary my shift by your supervisor.	125	66	21	23	20	255	3.99	Accept
2.	I like to have alternative start and end times at work.	65	107	31	26	24	255	3.62	Accept
3.	Having a relaxed work schedule gives me opportunity to schedule my personal responsibilities.	70	98	37	32	18	255	3.67	Accept
4.	A relaxed work schedule Influence my commitment at work.	80	123	16	17	19	255	3.89	Accept
5.	My present work schedule is quite flexible and engaging	95	85	21	24	30	255	3.75	Accept
Employee Commitment		SA	A	UN	SD	D	Total	Mean	Remark
6	I have a sense of belonging in my organisation because I am allowed to vary my shift.	69	115	31	22	18	255	3.46	Accept
7.	I would willingly remain in my organization on a long-term basis due to flexible work-time.	72	111	33	38	29	255	3.76	Accept
8.	I am very much attached and committed to my organization's policies.	40	144	14	37	20	255	3.58	Accept
9.	I occasionally work beyond normal working hours of my organization.	87	83	25	29	31	255	3.65	Accept
10.	I enjoy giving my best for the realization of my organization’s goals.	51	98	26	42	38	255	3.32	Accept

Source: Field Survey 2023

With a benchmark of 2.5 used by the study, the descriptive analysis shows that respondents affirm to all questions on time flexibility and employee commitment with mean scores ranging from 3.32 (lowest mean score) to 3.99 (highest mean score). This indicates that time flexibility in the understudied brewing firms is connected and can lead to employee commitment.

Table 5: Correlation between Worktime Flexibility and Employee Commitment

Correlations

		Worktime Flexibility	Employee Commitment
Worktime Flexibility	Pearson Correlation	1	.710**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	255	255
Employee Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.710**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	255	255

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 reveal strong positive relationship between worktime flexibility and employees’ commitment with r value=0.71 (71%). Since the p-value is 0.00<0.05, it shows that the result is statistically significant.

This result corroborates the study of Chukwuemeka et al. (2022) who examined flexible working environment and employee performance of plastic manufacturing industries in Anambra State, Nigeria and revealed a strong positive relationship between workplace flexibility and employee performance. Similarly, the finding is in line with that of Idowu (2020) that flexible work-hour arrangements improved employee performance, increased retention of employees and reduced employee work stress. The finding of the study reveals that a strong positive relationship exists between workplace flexibility and employee performance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Base on the finding, the study concludes that a strong positive relationship exists between worktime flexibility and employee commitment of brewing firms in South-South Nigeria. Flexibility enables employees to effectively balance their work and personal responsibilities, leading to increased job satisfaction, reduced work-family conflict, and improved overall well-being. Time flexibility also positively impacts employee productivity, performance, and creativity by providing greater control over work schedules, reducing interruptions, and fostering focused work.

Consequently, the study recommends that management of brewing firms should to strive towards the enactment of a flexible work schedule as it will impact employee commitment level. Brewing firms and other profit organizations whether public or private owned are encouraged to adopt and implement various forms of workplace flexibility measures to achieve employee's' maximum performance. Creating a supportive environment that embraces time flexibility will enable employees to achieve work-life balance and contribute to organizational success.

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