



WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE OF STATE-OWNED UNIVERSITIES IN NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA

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Abstract: *This study investigated the effect of workplace flexibility on employee performance of State-Owned Universities in North Central Nigeria. The study's specific objectives were to examine the effect of workplace flexibility (temporary contracts, flexible career path, compact working week, job sharing and flexitime) on employee performance of State-Owned Universities in North Central Nigeria. 4,076 academic and senior administrative employees from six (6) Public State Universities in North-Central Nigeria make up the study population. 1,825 academic staff members and 2,251 senior administrative staff members work at the six state universities. Using Taro Yamane's formula, 365 respondents were selected as a sample from the population. The staff members who took part in the survey were chosen using the random sampling technique. Data were obtained by distributing questionnaires, and the results were shown in tables and straightforward percentages. Version 23 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program was used for the statistical analysis. The data were analysed using descriptive, correlational, and inferential statistics. In addition to multiple regression analyses to investigate the percentage of variance in the dependent variables, Pearson's product-moment correlations were used to test the relationship between the variables. Tests of developed hypotheses were conducted at the significance level of 0.05. The results showed that temporary contract (41.9%), flexible career paths (53.6%), compact working week (54.4%), job sharing (43.0%) and flexitime (57.3%) all have a positive and significant effect on employee performance at State-Owned Universities in North Central Nigeria. The study found that employee performance at State-Owned Universities in North Central Nigeria has been considerably and favorably impacted by workplace flexibility. The outcome clearly shows that workplace flexibility improves employee performance. Nevertheless, management's availability and attitude are typically key factors in amplifying or mitigating the impact of workplace flexibility. Among other things, it was advised that there be a clear positive correlation between employee performance and temporary contracts. This means that in order to achieve the intended levels of employee engagement and commitment that are precise and effective, State-Owned Universities must investigate their value in luring professional and skilled personnel in to temporary contracts as a strategy to enhance employees' performance.*

Key words: *Workplace flexibility, temporary contracts, flexible career path, compact working week, job sharing and flexitime, employee performance.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The 21st century has seen unprecedented technological advancement, and the constant changes that impact the corporate world have made workplace flexibility more important. Once more, companies everywhere are striving to implement more adaptable methods of running their operations and selecting workers who will respond assertively to the frequent changes that an organization brings about. When an employee is adaptable by nature and responds well to the challenges presented by the organizational environment, they are said to be flexible at work. It is a manner of working and thinking that enables staff members to manage both their personal and professional lives and contribute. Additionally, it encourages staff members to come up with original and creative solutions to problems arising from their obligations in both their personal and professional lives. Even though changes are related to new directive business procedures, employee flexibility is evaluated in order to assess and judge performance based on effectiveness (Bhattacharya et al., 2005). For many years, flexibility has been a feature of many nations and organizations. Numerous companies have been providing flexible options to their staff members, and these employees have been taking advantage of the flexibility that their companies have to offer (CIPD 2012; Skinner et al., 2012; Matos & Galinsky, 2014). According to Ismael et al. (2010), defining, conceptualizing, and measuring performance is a challenging task that differs amongst organizations. Performance is typically understood to be a collection of both financial and non-financial metrics that indicate how well an organization is achieving its objectives (Lebans & Euske, 2006).

The idea of workplace flexibility was first presented in 1967 by the German aerospace company Messerschmitt-Bolkow-Blolm as a way to lower employee absenteeism brought on by problems with commuting (Avery & Zabel, 2001). The governments of the majority of European nations support the expansion of workplace flexibility. Employees should have some control over their working conditions, according to EU policy on job quality (European Commission, 2012). Legislation in the USA and Australia has encouraged the practice. As workplace flexibility gained traction, the majority of German and other European organizations were utilizing it by 1973. Due to a lack of workers, workplace flexibility became necessary in Germany and helped women reconcile the demands of work and family. It was regarded as a talent pool strategy as well. In the UK, Belgium, and Australia, the idea was widely used in local government, insurance, white-collar industries, and public service. Hewlett-Packard was the first American company to implement flextime, allowing workers to arrive at work early or late and complete the required number of hours each day. Recently, the idea has drawn the interest of researchers. Researchers have examined its relationships to individual and organizational performance while taking attitudes, health-related concerns, and employee well-being into account. Despite the fact that workplace flexibility has been implemented in many nations with concerns about performance, a critical review of the literature found that there isn't enough evidence to support this claim (Ortega, 2009, de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011). According to some academics, workplace flexibility is seen as affordable for businesses and agreeable by workers, which could lead to positive employee outcomes that could improve performance even in the absence of concrete data connecting it with performance (Bloom & Van Reenen, 2006). Findings from a meta-analysis supporting the notion that flexible work schedules and other work-family support initiatives improve employee performance are consistent with this viewpoint (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007, Butts et al., 2013).

Companies are providing workplace flexibility more and more to attract and retain high-performing workers and maintain their competitiveness. Employers are more focused on employee performance than attendance at the workplace, and flexible work arrangements are quickly becoming commonplace due to rising employee demands for greater control over how they manage their work-life balance and advancements in technology. According to Muthini et al. (2018), the Employment Act, which essentially controls the employment relationship in Nigeria, lays out the fundamental rights of workers, establishes the requirements for employment, and regulates issues pertaining to the employment of minors. According to Lin et al. (2008), performance is the result attained in achieving a firm's internal and external goals. Performance has a number of results, such as competitiveness, growth, survival, and success. Higher achievers at work show greater loyalty to their companies, which eventually boosts both organizational productivity and economic expansion. While workplace flexibility has been researched and promoted in Western nations, developing nations like Nigeria have seen relatively few of these efforts.

Whether a company is public or private, for profit or non-profit, employee performance is a critical concern (Ismael et al., 2010). Financial performance, market performance, and shareholder wealth are all included in the conversation about organizational performance. Furthermore, while the measurement of profitability in public and non-profit organizations depends on their ability to provide welfare services to the general public, the measurement of success in profit-oriented organizations is dependent on profit, return on assets, and return on investment (Richard et al., 2009). It should be understood that organizational outcomes that are regarded as key performance indicators depend on the objectives that the organization sets forth. According to Dragma et al. (2011), organizations need to choose the appropriate performance goals. According to Parmenter (2010), key organizational goals are a collection of metrics that focus on the aspects of an organization's performance that are most crucial to its future and current success. It should be further understood that in order for organizations to reach their objectives, both students' satisfaction with the services received and the effectiveness and efficiency with which employees carry out their duties are prerequisites. As a result, the accomplishment of objectives set forth by health organizations, including those related to service quality, employee happiness, productivity, engagement, and customer satisfaction, as well as the creative and effective behavior of these employees. These are the behavioral outcomes that customers and employees have to exhibit in order for the employees to assist their organizations in reaching their objectives.

Undoubtedly one of the most populous nations in Africa, Nigeria has a developing economy and a sizable labor market due to the opportunities and challenges presented by globalization (Falola et al., 2016). But according to Ngobeni and Bezuidenhout (2011), universities are now at risk of losing highly skilled knowledge workers to other organizations that offer higher salaries. Rapid technological development has both aided and challenged workplace flexibility in many Nigerian organizations. Although many Nigerian organizations, including universities, have accepted it as a policy, there are still concerns about how it will be implemented. According to published research, the Nigerian educational system places a lot of emphasis on flextime through the use of contract work, job sharing, and shift work, while largely ignoring other workplace flexibility options like telecommuting and flexible career paths (Osisioma et al., 2015; Kiprono, 2018). One of the ways that globalization has helped organizations manage

work-life balance and boost employee performance is through workplace flexibility. According to Akanji (2013), there are two main categories for the Nigerian work pattern structure: formal and informal. Both government-owned organizations, such as public hospitals, police departments, and government-funded universities, as well as privately held establishments, such as hotels, transportation companies, telecommunications companies, and universities, typically openly employ formal structures. However, the informal structure is clearly visible in the self-employed micro, small, medium, and large businesses run by indigenous entrepreneurs. Workplace flexibility is one of the work-family policies that employers must create and implement, as it can be inferred that globalization has presented genuine opportunities and challenges to the Nigerian education sector (Akanji, 2013). Thus, the purpose of this study is to ascertain how employee performance at North Central Nigeria's state-owned universities is affected by workplace flexibility.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There is a dearth of empirical research on the impact of workplace flexibility on employee performance in State-Owned Universities in Nigeria most especially, North Central Nigeria; the majority of these studies have been carried out in developed nations (Mgbemena et al., 2022). Government policy and legislation in the USA, Australia, and most of Europe encourage greater availability of workplace flexibility; in Nigeria, however, this is not the case. As a result, questions have been raised concerning the unprofessional attitude of these university staff members toward their work as well as the harm and difficulties that students encounter at the hands of these staff members. The unfavorable work attitude exhibited by these Nigerian employees is especially concerning. Years of unfavorable attitudes, especially in State-Owned Universities, have further complicated these employees' prospects for the future, with many of them already in a dire and frustrated state (Omoleke, 2010, Abiodun et al., 2014). It has been noted that there are attitude issues at every level of care. This explains why some wealthy people look to other countries for high-quality educational assistance.

Additionally, there has been a significant exodus of Nigerian academics to other nations, usually in search of improved working conditions. This has caused a human resource shortage in these sectors in addition to taking a toll on the few that are still there in the form of workload, stress, and burnout (Punch, 2018). Many times, lack of workplace flexibility strategies like job sharing, flexible career paths, compact working weeks, temporary contracts, and flextime is to blame for the unsatisfactory attitude, heavy workload, and high stress levels among university employees. Consequently, there has been much debate about how well State-Owned Universities perform in terms of employee engagement, employee commitment, and their capacity to hold on to talented staff. In response to the above, a study on workplace flexibility in state-owned universities primarily those in the North Central States is deemed necessary. More research is necessary because there is a significant research gap in the area of workplace flexibility in state-owned universities due to the paucity of available data.

To assist the researcher in determining pertinent dimensions and methodology to use for this study, related empirical studies were reviewed. Based on the numerous empirical studies that the researcher reviewed for the study, it was discovered that while many studies have been done on the impact of workplace flexibility on performance, none of them have been done at State-Owned Universities in North Central Nigeria. These studies include those by Sabiha and

Daro (2017), Kiprono (2018), Mekuri-Ndimele (2020), Bett (2022), Mgbemena et al. (2022), and Dikirr & Omuya (2023), among others. Nevertheless, no empirically reviewed study has used the same analytical or methodological approaches to examine the relationship between workplace flexibility and employee performance at State-Owned Universities in North Central Nigeria. It is against this background that the study was undertaken to investigate the effect of workplace flexibility on employee performance and the subsequent performance of State-Owned Universities in North Central Nigeria.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to investigate the effect of workplace flexibility on employee performance of State-Owned Universities in North Central Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to;

- i. examine the extent to which temporary contracts affect employee performance of State-Owned Universities in North Central Nigeria.
- ii. assess the extent to which flexible career paths affect employee performance of public State-Owned Universities in North Central Nigeria.
- iii. ascertain the extent to which compact working week affect employee performance of State-Owned Universities in North Central Nigeria.
- iv. find out the extent to which job sharing affect employee performance of State-Owned Universities in North Central Nigeria.
- v. determine the extent to which flexitime affect employee performance of State-Owned Universities in North Central Nigeria.

1.4 Significance of the Study

While workplace flexibility has been researched in academic institutions all over the world, not much is known about the connection between workplace flexibility and employee performance in public state universities in Nigeria, particularly in North Central Nigeria. The relationship between workplace flexibility and employee performance in state-owned universities in North Central Nigeria has not been empirically studied, despite the fact that workplace flexibility has been linked to increased productivity, service quality, customer satisfaction, employee retention, and other organizational outcomes. Consequently, the study will be a step in that direction. The study offers some crucial points for practitioners to think about when choosing and adjusting tactics that could raise employee performance. The relationship between different workplace flexibility dimensions and employee performance would be further explored in the study. Organizations would receive the data they need from this to support their decision to introduce workplace flexibility, particularly in state-owned universities. The study would reintroduce and present the workplace flexibility construct in a variety of ways for researchers. As a result, the study would encourage consideration of potential directions for future research examining the effects of workplace flexibility on both employers and employees. As a result, the study will be used as a guide by other academics and researchers conducting related studies for both academic and practical purposes. Since the research will highlight workplace flexibility that most significantly improves performance outcomes in public universities in particular and the Nigerian public educational sector at large, government and other policy makers in the country's educational sector will be guided in drawing conclusions about the impact of workplace flexibility on employee performance. These conclusions will also help to direct spending. Lastly, the study's conclusions would greatly benefit society at large since unsatisfied, stressed-out, and uncommitted workers pose a health risk and incur expenses for the government, education, and student guidance.

Therefore, implementing workplace flexibility at State-Owned universities to increase committed and satisfied workers is in the best interests of the entire society. If appropriately put into practice, it is hoped that the research's recommendations will have a significant impact on the work performance levels of employees at state-owned universities.

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section comprises of the conceptual, theoretical and empirical review for the study.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The link between workplace flexibility and worker performance is explained by the conceptual framework for this study that is mentioned above. Employee performance is considered a dependent variable, whereas work flexibility is considered an independent variable. This guarantees that the two variables interact to ensure a thorough and effective performance process.

2.1.1 Workplace Flexibility

According to Rastogi et al. (2018), workplace flexibility refers to an employee's ability to choose where, when, and how they exercise control over their tasks. Workspace flexibility refers to the various ways in which an employee can use their workspace, such as having control over how it looks overall, how much they can customize it, and whether or not there are multiple workspaces available (Roskams et al., 2020). In addition, control over indoor environment factors like light, noise, and temperature was included in workspace flexibility (Roskams et al., 2020). Furthermore, the conventional workplace has given way to a plethora of new and innovative work environments.

Accordingly, flexibility that gives workers greater control over their workspace will lead to higher levels of engagement, which in turn motivates workers to exert more effort and enhance performance (Alfes et al., 2013). Similarly, a variety of work arrangements that alter the regular time and/or location of work are proposed by Workplace Flexibility (2010). According to Galea et al. (2013), workplace flexibility typically involves an agreement between an employer and employee to schedule work flexibly in order to benefit both parties. The definitions given above offer a thorough analysis of workplace flexibility and its components. It is clear that this term encompasses a wider range of variables than just shifts in work hours or location; these include job sharing, career breaks, flextime, compressed work weeks, and flexible career paths, to name a few.

Due to a number of sociodemographic shifts, workplace flexibility has grown in importance in today's corporate environment and offers advantages to both employers and employees (Masuda et al., 2011; Nijp et al., 2012). The workforce is getting older, there are more and more women working, and more workers are having families. Flexible work arrangements have become necessary due to a number of factors, including changes in technology, the need for employees to work longer days and hours, the need for more roles, the rising retirement age, and a labor shortage (Rothbard et al., 2015). The acceptance and application of workplace flexibility is a response to the rising demands and expectations of workers brought on by shifts in the socio-demographic landscape. The goal of its adoption and execution has been to make it easier for workers to reconcile work and family obligations with the least amount of conflict possible (Wheatley, 2016). It is understood that when workers are able to strike a balance between work and family, they become happier in their jobs and become more productive, which in turn improves performance. Furthermore, flexibility in the workplace enables workers to manage their own schedules, improve their wellbeing, and enhance their work-family balance (Rastogi et al., 2015).

2.1.2 Dimensions of Workplace Flexibility

Temporary contracts, flexible career path, compact working week, job sharing and flextime adopted as dimensions of flexible working arrangements in this study.

i. Temporary Contracts: Regarding the definition of a temporary contract, there is disagreement. It has frequently been viewed differently by various nations. Essentially, there are regional and national variations in the meaning of a temporary contract; for example, what is deemed temporary in one country may not be in another. Hardy and Walker (2002), however, contend that any employment that deviates from permanent employment in that it is not continuous and need not last the entire year is considered temporary work. The modern workplace is gradually incorporating the use of temporary workers as a permanent feature. In an apparent attempt to lower labor costs, increase managerial flexibility, and gain more control over labor, many organizations have turned to using casual, temporary, part-time, contract, sub-contracted, and outsourced workforces more frequently (Gachunga, 2008).

ii. Flexible Career Path: According to Tomlison et al. (2018), a flexible career is one that adapts to a person's needs and preferences for sustainability and flexibility as their circumstances change. It is influenced by institutional factors, organizational dynamics, and personal career decisions. Given how unstable work is getting due to the job market's constant changes, committing to and concentrating on a specific career path is getting harder and harder. As such, a new school of thought that encourages career flexibility is challenging a narrowly defined approach to career path (Carter et al., 2009). Career paths have evolved over time from a continuous upward trajectory to distinct routes that companies have chosen (Maestro & Horas, 2011).

iii. Compact Working Week: According to Bliss and Thornton (2010), a compact working week, also known as a compressed workweek, is an alternative work arrangement that enables employees to work the standard 40-hour workweek in fewer than five days per week, or ten days in two weeks. Generally speaking, a compact workweek consists of three days off and four days of ten hours per day, or "4/40" as it is sometimes called (Poor, 2010). The compressed workweek comes in a variety of forms, though the 4/40 is the most well-known. For instance, in a four-day schedule, in recent years, variations like the 4/39, 4/38, and even a 4/32 arrangement have grown in acceptance and popularity (Poor, 2010). There are, however, also instances where workweeks are three days long. Although different arrangements do occur, these are usually in the form of three twelve-hour days (3/36) (Bird, 2010). Additionally, there is a mixed arrangement where employees work three days one week and four days the next (Poor, 2010). Another option is the 9/80 schedule, which gives employees an extra day off every other week (Bliss & Thornton, 2010). The 4/40 is the most important and has drawn the most attention despite the abundance of options.

iv. Job-Sharing: Job-sharing is described as a part-time arrangement in which two workers share responsibility for one position's workload during a full-time shift (Freeman & Coll, 2009: 65, UN, 2012). Since its introduction in the United States in 1970, job-sharing has been observed to be more suitable for use by nurses and teaching staff in the health sector. But it has also been embraced by the public and private sectors as a way to provide flexibility in the workplace (Ggolipour et al., 2010). According to Ggolipour et al. (2010), there are three categories of job-sharing: unrelated responsibility, responsibility sharing, and responsibility participation. Employers who have adopted and utilized job-sharing contend that because it offers equal employment opportunities, it boosts workers' motivation and, consequently, productivity.

v. Flexitime: is a contract in which workers select their start and end times from a range of available hours and are required to work principal hours and a predetermined number of hours during an accounting or reconciling period (Whittard, 2005, Osisoma et al., 2015). Beyond the set hours, employees essentially have flexible windows of time at the start and end of each workday to decide whether or not to report for duty. Workers must be reminded that they are required to log a 30-minute break each workday if they work longer than six hours. If workers have never had flexitime before, they might need more guidance on what is and isn't acceptable. According to Kiprono (2018), allowing workers to set their own hours will improve work-life balance, which will subsequently lead to workers providing professional services.

2.1.3 Employee Performance

Employee performance is the outcome of workers' efforts, which are evaluated in terms of quantity and quality according to organizationally defined work standards. The definition of good performance is optimal performance, or performance that complies with organizational guidelines and aids in the accomplishment of organizational objectives. Since dependable human resources are essential to raising employee performance, a good organization is one that works to develop its human resource capabilities (Saputra et al., 2018). The term "performance" derives from the words "actual performance" or "job performance" (Iskamto et al., 2020). According to Achu et al. (2020), performance is the execution of a task and the enhancement of the work in accordance with its responsibilities in order to achieve the desired outcomes. According to this definition, performance is more focused on the process, whereby adjustments are made as tasks are carried out to maximize productivity and accomplish goals. (Iskamto et al., 2020). Thus, work performance or results in terms of both quality and quantity attained by employees in completing their tasks in compliance with assigned responsibilities can be defined as employee performance (Iskamto et al., 2021).

2.2.5 Measures of Employee Performance

Measures to determine performance include those advanced by Robins in Iskamoto *et al.* (2020), namely; employee engagement and employee commitment.

i. Employee Engagement

Employee engagement, according to Adkins (2016), is the level of passion and involvement with the job that contributes to the organization's value. Furthermore, employee engagement was defined by Khan et al. (2015) as an employee's devotion to a company and their free will to work beyond the call of duty. Onoh et al. (2018) proposed an alternative definition of employee engagement, which is the individual's involvement and contentment with a strong work ethic. Employee engagement is defined as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" for the purposes of this study.

ii. Employee Commitment

According to Syukri and Heryanto (2019), employee commitment is characterized by a strong desire to work for a specific organization indefinitely, as well as a willingness to fully embrace its values, views, and objectives. It's a mindset that represents staff loyalty within the company and a continuous procedure by which staff members voice concerns to their employer. A particular kind of psychological connection that exists between a person and a target is called commitment (Abosedo and Adesanya, 2017).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Workplace flexibility has its theoretical roots in human resource management. This study's theoretical framework is based on psychological job control theory.

2.2.1 Psychological Job Control Theory

The perception of an employee's job demands and control over their work is explained by the psychological job control theory. Studies by Deci and Ryan (1990) and Karasek and Theorell (1990) demonstrate how critical it is for an individual's well-being to have strong views of job control and support. According to this theory, there is a positive correlation between job demands and an employee's capacity to decide when and how to complete tasks. According to the theory, an employee who has a job with high demands but little control will experience stress. Conversely, a worker who perceives high levels of job control and high job demands will be less stressed (Gronlung, 2007). The Job Demand and Control (JDC) Model, created by Karasek in 1979, is a psychological theory of job control. The JDC model, along with a few other models, can be used to more precisely translate the subjective aspect of psychological pressure at work into a quantifiable factor of job stress, which affects employees' productivity. The model focuses on the relationship between Job Demand and Control (JDC), two job stress predictors. This is due to the Psychological Job Control Theory's emphasis on how employees can control their job demands, which lowers workplace stress.

The true benefit of workplace flexibility is that it allows employees to choose how and when to complete tasks. Employees who have control over their work, including scheduling, location, and duration, are likely to experience lower levels of stress at work, be more motivated to work, and perform better. Accordingly, high job demands combined with high job control (decision latitude) are not stressful because active jobs are viewed as demanding environments where individuals can exercise defensive behavior. If an employee is given job control or decision latitude, which allows them to choose when, where, and how to complete their work, even with high job demand, they won't experience psychological pressure from their job. High demands and little job control, or "decision latitude," on the other hand, are less likely to cause defensive behaviors and instead frequently result in decreased activity and elevated stress. The workers are under pressure in these circumstances. It should be recognized that interactions between demand and control are more strongly correlated with job stress in situations where there is less job control (decision latitude).

Scholars have concluded that there are two implications of the JDC model for job demands: psychological strain on the job and implications for learning while working (Hausser et al., 2014). Job stress is the result of having low job control combined with high job demands. It can exert pressure on the body and mind. On the other hand, occupations with high job demands and control cause employees to feel efficient and confident in themselves; this is known as active learning. The JDC model is predicated on the idea that high job control, in the face of high job demands, not only protects against mounting stress—a physical and psychological strain—but also fosters a sense of accomplishment, merit, and self-efficiency that boosts output. According to a study by Hausser et al. (2014), the combination of high job demands and high control in the JDC model had some positive effects on productivity and active learning. Following the implementation of an experimental assimilation in that study, it was demonstrated that high job control increased speed and precision at work, while high job demands had a positive impact on quantitative productivity (Hausser et al., 2014).

The JDC model has been utilized in numerous studies by authors. Jahanbakhsh et al. (2010) used the job design questionnaire created by Jackson Wall and Mullarkey as a predictor variable in a study on the relationship between job control and the degree of stress as well as mental health parameters among petrochemical personnel in Isfahan. The study examined how job stress and mental health would be jeopardized if it became impossible to manage performance and make decisions at work. According to the study, using some creative techniques, like allowing employees to create their own schedules and participate in decision-making, may provide them more control over their work, which will lower stress and improve mental health (Keinan & Malach-Pines, 2007).

2.3 Review of Related Empirical Studies

Sabiha and Daro (2017), examined the impact of flexible working hours on the employees' performance. Under the current study, a survey of the employees of telecommunication/call centers has been conducted with a convenient sample size of 200. The goal was to test the null hypothesis, which states that there is a connection between employee performance and flexible work schedules. In contrast to executives who are well-versed in flexible work arrangements, the middle and lower levels may know less about flexibility, according to the straightforward graphs and frequency distribution. Although there is a need for flexible working hours in Pakistan, there is still a need to raise awareness of the concept throughout the management hierarchy. Employee quality of life and job satisfaction are positively correlated with flexible work schedules. Since flexible working hours benefit both the company and the employees, many organizations support and encourage them.

Kiprono (2018), researched on flexible working patterns on employee performance in Kericho county referral hospital in Kericho County. The research examined the following objectives; to assess the effects of part time working, to investigate the effects of work shift, to determine the effects of flexi time and to establish the effects of temporary contracts on employee performance. The study adopted descriptive research design. The 111 employees of Kericho County Referral Hospital were categorized into top management, physicians, clinical officers, nurses, and subordinates. Using stratified sample techniques, 104 employees of the Kericho Referral Hospital were chosen, and simple random sampling was applied to each stratum. A closed-ended and open-ended questionnaire was used to gather the data, and the validity of the research instrument was assessed by the researcher's supervisor, peer reviewers, and pilot testing. The Cronbach Alpha formula was used to establish the questionnaire's reliability. With the use of the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS), descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data, and tables and charts were used to present the findings. The results showed that flexible work arrangements had a substantial impact on employees' productivity within a company. Flexi working methods were found to have contributed 22.9% of the performance, while other factors that were not measured accounted for 77.1%. While flexible time was positively correlated with performance but not significantly so, temporary contracts, work shifts, and part-time employment were positive significant predictors. According to the study, temporary contracts, work shifts, and part-time employment improve performance and should be implemented.

Mekuri-Ndimele (2020), examined the relationship between work flexibility and employee performance in Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State. The research design used for the study was a cross-sectional survey, and responses were requested from Rivers State Deposit Money Bank employees. A structured questionnaire was used to gather primary data. The study's

sample consisted of 202 workers from the 18 Deposit Money Banks that are open in Rivers State. The Taro Yamen sample size formula was used to calculate a sample size of 134. Using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 23.0, the Spearman Rank Order Correlation was used to test the hypotheses. The results of the study showed that employee performance at Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State and work flexibility are significantly correlated. The study came to the conclusion that employee performance in Rivers State's Deposit Money Banks is significantly impacted by work flexibility. In order to foster innovation, the study suggests that Deposit Money Banks include flexible work schedules in their human resource management plans, policies, and strategies.

Ugba (2021), investigated Flexible Working Arrangement and performance of medical employees of teaching hospitals in North-Central, Nigeria. The precise goals of the study were to: (i) find out how much flexible scheduling affects service quality; (ii) find out how much job sharing affects clinical effectiveness; (iii) evaluate how much a short workweek affects patient focus; (iv) determine how much a flexible career path affects patient safety; and (v) find out how much temporary contracts affect medical efficacy. The population of the study, which used a survey design, was 5,533 medical staff members from six teaching hospitals in North-Central Nigeria. Using the Cochran formula, a sample size of 410 was drawn from the population. Through the use of a cluster sampling technique, the sample size was selected from the population. Simple percentages and tables were used to display the data. The first and third hypotheses were tested using the Pearson's product moment correlation, and the second, fourth, and fifth hypotheses were tested using regression analysis. The study's conclusions showed that job sharing had a significant positive impact on clinical efficiency (Beta = 0.957, t-value = 104.002, $p < 0.01$), flexitime had a significant positive relationship with service quality ($F = 10816.346$, $R^2 = 0.964$, $p < 0.01$), compact working weeks had a significant positive relationship with patient focus ($F = 2637.025$, $R^2 = 0.863$, $p < 0.01$), flexible career path had a significant positive impact on patient safety (Beta = 0.912, t-value = 44.632, $p < 0.01$), and temporary contracts had a significant positive impact on medical efficacy (Beta = 0.971, t-value = 82.005, $p < 0.01$). The study found that medical staff performance at teaching hospitals in North Central, Nigeria was significantly impacted by flexible work arrangements. According to the study, teaching hospitals should keep granting their staff members flexitime because it can improve the quality of services and give patients access to healthcare around-the-clock. The study also suggested that in order to achieve the highest level of clinical efficiency, medical staff members should be encouraged to provide team-based care.

Bett (2022), sought to assess flexible work arrangements and employee performance in agricultural co-operatives in Kericho County. The foundation of the study was spillover theory. The research design chosen was correlational. With a sample size of 137 respondents, the study's target population consisted of all 210 employees working for agricultural cooperatives in Kericho County. Primary data from both structured and unstructured questionnaires were used in the study. Standard deviation and means are used in the study's descriptive analysis. The hypothesis and the relationship between the study variables were tested using correlation analysis. The study discovered that scheduling, development shifts, and employee reorganization were the means by which flexible work arrangements were accomplished. As a result, there was a decrease in absenteeism, more hours of service were provided, and workers were able to pursue new opportunities. The findings demonstrated a statistically significant positive correlation ($R = 0.801$, $p < 0.05$) between employee performance and

flexible work arrangements. According to the study's findings, teleworking and flexible work schedules significantly improved worker performance. The study suggested that by implementing ICT infrastructure, agricultural societies should enhance flexible work arrangements.

Mgbemena et al. (2022), investigated the flexible working and employee performance in manufacturing industries in Anambra State, Nigeria. The purpose of the study is to ascertain the impact of flextime, temporary contracts, shift work, self-roistering, and part-time work on employee performance in Anambra State, Nigeria's manufacturing industries. There was a review of pertinent conceptual empirical literature. The study used a descriptive survey design with the Spill-over theory as its foundation. The Nigerian state of Anambra hosted the study. 2090 workers from Anambra State's plastic manufacturing industries made up the study's population. The Borg and Gall statistical formula was utilized to ascertain the 408 sample size. A questionnaire was the study's instrument. Face and content validity were used, and test-retest and the Cronbach Alpha method were used to ensure the instrument's reliability. Simple percentage analysis was employed to answer the research questions and Multiple Regression analysis was in testing the hypotheses. Results showed that Self-roistering has a significant positive influence on employee; part time working had a positive significant effect on employee performance in manufacturing industry and shift work had a positive significant effect on employee performance in manufacturing industry in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study conclude that flexible working had a positive significant effect on employee performance in manufacturing industry Anambra State. It was recommended among other that management should imbibe self-roistering as part of the flexible timing procedure; it tends to enhance the employees' abilities, interest and zealousness towards their jobs in the organization. Multiple Regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses and simple percentage analysis was used to answer the research questions. According to the findings, self-roistering significantly improves employee performance; part-time employment significantly improves employee performance in the manufacturing sector; and shift work significantly improves employee performance in the manufacturing sector in Anambra State, Nigeria. According to the study's findings, flexible working significantly improved worker performance in Anambra State's manufacturing sector. Among other things, it was suggested that management incorporate self-roistering into the flexible scheduling process because it tends to improve employees' skills, interests, and fervor for their work within the company.

Dikirr & Omuya (2023), examined the influence of flexible work practices on employee performance in institutions of higher learning in Nyeri County, Kenya. The Three Stage Model for Talent Management, Spill Over Theory, and Self-determination Theory served as the study's pillars. A descriptive research design was used for this investigation. The study's target population comprised 1300 employees from Dedan Kimathi University and Karatina University. Stratified random sampling was used in the study to select 260 staff members. Questionnaires were employed in the study to gather data. A pilot study was carried out involving 10% of the sample size, or 26 employees. Factor loadings were utilized to assess the content validity. To assess dependability, the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient approach was employed. With the aid of SPSS version 28, quantitative data was examined using both inferential (correlation and regression) and descriptive (frequency, percentage, mean) statistics. Tables with the tabulated data were displayed. Before, during, and after data collection, ethical standards were upheld. The results indicate that: there is a weak significant

relationship ($r=0.240$, $p=0.000$) between teleworking and employee performance; there is a moderate significant relationship ($r=0.348$, $p=0.000$) between leave and employee performance; and there is a strong significant relationship ($r=0.467$, $p=0.005$) between job sharing and employee performance. According to the study, the following actions should be taken by the institutions: they should allow for flexibility in staff schedules; they should develop policies outlining how to pay employees who are called back to work while on leave; they should arrange for staff training, particularly with regard to technology use; management should also foster a culture of sharing; and they should have appropriate plans for conducting orientations and inductions to ensure that new hires are on boarded efficiently.

The researcher reviewed related empirical studies from the previous section to determine the most pertinent dimensions and methodology to use for this investigation. The researcher discovered that numerous studies have been done on the impact of flexible working arrangements on performance in the public sector, manufacturing industries, health care institutions, and telecommunication organizations both abroad and in Nigeria based on the various empirical studies reviewed in the study. but not State-Owned Universities (Sabiha and Daro (2017); Kiprono (2018); Mekuri-Ndimele (2020); (Ugba, 2021); Bett (2022); Mgbemena et al. (2022); Dikirr & Omuya (2023). However, none of the empirically reviewed studies has researched on the effect flexible working arrangement on employee performance of State-Owned Universities in North Central Nigeria using the same analytical/methodological approaches. This is the knowledge gap that needs to be filled.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a survey research design. The study used a survey design because it is best suited to ascertain the extent of the relationship that exists between the independent variable (workplace flexibility) and dependent variable (employee performance).

3.2 Participants and Sampling

4,076 academic and senior administrative employees from six (6) public state universities in North-Central Nigeria make up the study population. 1,825 academic staff members and 2,251 senior administrative staff members work at the six state universities. Using Taro Yamane's formula, 365 respondents were selected as a sample from the population. The staff members who took part in the survey were chosen using the random sampling technique. The staff distribution of the population is presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Staff Population of State-Owned Universities in North-Central Nigeria

S/N	Universities	Academic Staff	Senior Admin Staff	Total
1	Benue State University, Makurdi	620	832	1452
2	IBB University, Lapai	300	267	567
3	Kogi State University, Anyangba	320	417	737
4	Kwara State University, Molete	120	135	255
5	Nasarawa State University, Keffi	300	400	365
6	Plateau State University, Boko	165	200	365
	Total	1,825	2,251	4,076

Source: Registry Department of the Universities (2024).

3.3 Reliability of the Instrument

Utilizing the test-retest method, the instrument's reliability was assessed. Fifty staff members of two particular public state universities in North Central Nigeria participated in a pilot study.

The participants were given the questionnaire twice, separated by a span of two weeks. Each measuring device's internal consistency reliability was evaluated using the Cronbach alpha coefficient. The findings demonstrate that all of the factors' reliability, as determined by Cronbach's alpha, is above 0.70, indicating that the internal consistency of the variable's items is supported.

Table 3: Reliability Test Result

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Temporary Contracts	0.926	4
Flexible career path	0.904	4
Compact working week	0.918	4
Job Sharing	0.910	4
Flexitime	0.860	4
Employee Performance	0.902	8

Source: Authors' Computation from SPSS Output, 2024.

3.4 Measurement Instruments

Workplace Flexibility (WKP)

The WKF is a self-report tool that comes with three scales: job sharing, flexitime, compact working weeks, flexible career paths, and temporary contracts. The 28 items that made up the workplace flexibility instrument were chosen based on the research's accepted elements (Mitchell et al., 2001). A five-point Likert scale was used to score the response scale, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree." Higher levels of workplace flexibility are indicated by a higher response aggregate.

Employee Performance Scale (EPS)

The EPS evaluates three essential facets of worker performance. Employee engagement and employee commitment are two of the three scales that make up the Employee Perception Scale (EPS), a self-report tool. A seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 for "never" to 6 for "always," was used to score the response scale. Eight statement items based on the adopted aspects from the research comprised the employee performance instrument. (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003).

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Version 23 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program was used to perform the statistical analysis. The data were analysed using descriptive, correlational, and inferential statistics. To examine the relationship between the variables, Pearson's product-moment correlations were used. Multiple regression analysis was used to further examine the relationship between the variables and determine how much of the variance in the dependent variable—employee performance—was explained by the independent variables (workplace flexibility dimensions). Tested hypotheses were significant at the 0.05 level.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

Regression analysis, correlation analysis, and descriptive statistics were used to present and analyze the participant data.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics Analysis

Variable	Mean	Standard Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Temporary contracts	4.29	.781	1.697	2.879
Flexible career paths	4.30	.726	1.935	3.117
Compact working week	4.27	.831	1.842	3.648
Job sharing	3.62	.629	1.814	3.703
Flexitime	3.50	.695	1.456	2.205
Employee Performance	3.60	.606	1.503	2.449

Source: Authors' Computation from SPSS Output, 2024

The means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis of the employee performance and workplace flexibility variables are given in Table 4. Table 4 demonstrates that the organization's flexible career paths (M = 4.29; SD = 0.781) and FWA Temporary contracts (M = 4.30; SD = 0.726) received the highest mean scores, while the compact working week sub-scale (M = 4.27; SD = 0.831) received the lowest mean score. Employee performance (M = 3.60; SD = 0.606), job sharing to the organization (M = 3.62; SD = 0.629), and flexitime (M = 3.50; SD = 0.695) are also included. The FWAS's skewness and kurtosis values did not fall within the recommended normality range of -1 to +1 for these coefficients; instead, they ranged from 1.697 to 1.935 for skewness and from 2.879 to 3.648 for kurtosis.

Table 5: Correlations Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Temporary contracts	1					
Flexible career paths	.683**	1				
Compact working week	.660**	.639**	1			
Job sharing	.522**	.410**	.642**	1		
Flexitime	.276**	.372**	.336**	.344**	1	
Employee Performance	.411**	.653**	.630**	.616**	.505**	1
N	365	365	365	365	365	

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

Source: Authors' Computation from SPSS Output, 2024.

Table 5 shows that there was a correlation between employee performance and temporary contracts (r = 0.411), between flexible career paths and compact working weeks (r = 0.653), between job sharing and Flexitime (r = 0.505), and between job sharing and compact working weeks (r = 0.630). The study found that there was a linear relationship between each independent variable and the dependent variable because each independent variable had an r-squared value greater than 0. This result demonstrated that the data met the multiple regression's linearity assumption.

Table 6: Regression Model

Variable	Standardized coefficients		C	Collinearity Statistics	
	Beta	T		Sig.	Tolerance
Temporary contracts	.419	5.281	.000	.727	1.375
Flexible career paths	.536	7.755	.006	.913	1.095
Com working week	.544	9.635	.000	.783	1.278
Job sharing	.430	5.322	.000	.773	1.452
Flexitime	.573	5.620	.000	.844	1.367
R		.979			
R Square		.958			
Adjusted R Square		.930			
Durbin-Watson		1.648			
ANOVA F Statistic		270.322			
Sig.		.000			

Predictors: (Constant), temporary contracts, flexible career paths, com working week, job sharing, flexitime

Dependent Variable: Employee performance

Source: Authors' Computation from SPSS Output, 2024.

Multicollinearity, Tolerance (TOL), and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) were used to test the regression model. Every parameter's VIF was less than 4, indicating that multicollinearity was not an issue and that each independent variable's contribution to the difference was substantial. A 95.8% variance in employee performance was explained by all the variables. The dependent variable was significantly predicted by the independent variables, as shown by the R2 value of 0.958. Furthermore, a p-value of 0.000 < 0.05 and a F ratio of 270.322 showed that the coefficient of determination was significant. It was backed by a 97.9% change in R (R=.979), indicating that there is a significant relationship between workplace flexibility dimensions (temporary contracts, flexible career paths, compact working week, job sharing and flexitime) and employee performance.

4.2 Hypotheses Testing and Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis one states that temporary contracts has no significant effect on employee performance of State-owned Universities in North-Central Nigeria. As demonstrated by Table 6's result, which is less than p = 0.05, temporary contracts have a positive and significant impact on employee performance (beta value of (β) = 0.419; t = 5.281; p-value = 0.000). The investigation thus disproves the null hypothesis (H01). The outcome is consistent with research by Kiprono (2018) and Ugba (2021), which found a strong and favorable correlation between flexible work schedules and commitment-mediated medical efficacy. It was not, however, the same as research conducted by de Oliveira et al. (2017), who found that hospital medical efficacy is negatively impacted by temporary contracts. The results of the study also show that medical efficacy is greatly impacted by temporary contracts.

The second hypothesis states that flexible career paths has no significant effect on employee performance of State-owned Universities in North-Central Nigeria. Employee performance was found to be positively and significantly affected by flexible career paths, as evidenced by a beta value of (β) = 0.536; t = 7.775; p-value = 0.006, which is less than p = 0.05. Consequently,

the null hypothesis (H0₂) was disproved. The outcome aligns with the research conducted by Price and Reichert (2017) and Ugba (2021), who discovered a noteworthy and favorable influence of flexible career paths on worker performance in their individual investigations.

The test of hypothesis three (H0₃), indicated that compact working week has a positive and significant effect on employee performance with a beta value of $(\beta) = 0.544$; $t = 9.635$; p -value = 0.000, which is less than $p = 0.05$. The null hypothesis holds that employee performance at North Central state-owned universities is not significantly impacted by a compressed workweek. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H0₃) was disproved. The outcome is consistent with the studies of Ugba (2021) and Mgbemena et al. (2022) and shows that shift work significantly improved employee performance in the manufacturing sector in Anambra State, Nigeria.

The fourth hypothesis states that job sharing has no significant effect on employee performance of State-owned Universities in North-Central Nigeria. With a beta value of $(\beta) = 0.430$; $t = 5.322$; p -value = 0.000, which is less than $p = 0.05$, the result showed that job sharing has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H0₄) was disproved. According to the study, job sharing at state-owned universities in North and Central Nigeria can boost worker performance. This outcome is consistent with research by Toubassi (2018) and Ugba (2021), which confirmed that job sharing and employee performance in state-owned universities in North Central Nigeria have a positive and significant relationship. Employee performance and job sharing have a strong and significant relationship, according to Dikirr and Omuya's (2023) findings.

The test of hypothesis five (H0₅), indicated that flexitime has a positive and significant effect on work engagement with a beta value of $(\beta) = 0.573$; $t = 5.620$; p -value = 0.000, which is less than $p = 0.05$. The null hypothesis holds that employee performance at state-owned universities in North Central is not significantly impacted by flexitime. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H0₅) was disproved. The findings align with the research conducted by Kiprono (2018) and Ugba (2021), who discovered a noteworthy and affirmative correlation between flexitime and the job performance of employees at state-owned universities in North Central Nigeria. Employee performance and flexible scheduling have a strong and significant relationship, according to Dikirr and Omuya's (2023) findings.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section comprises of conclusion and recommendations respectively.

5.1 Conclusion

The study investigated workplace flexibility and employee performance of State-Owned Universities in North-Central Nigeria. Workplace flexibility have significantly and positively impacted employee performance of State-Owned Universities in North Central Nigeria. Strategies for improving employee performance include job sharing, flexible career paths, short work weeks, temporary contracts, and flexitime. These approaches are critical to achieving the required level of performance from employees. As the results demonstrate, workplace flexibility improves employee performance. Nevertheless, management's availability and attitude typically have a significant impact on how much of an impact flexibility has. Thus, the study corroborated that workplace flexibility remains a key resource and strategy utilized by these Universities for the enhancement of employee performance of State-Owned Universities in North Central Nigeria.

5.2 Recommendations

- i. In order to achieve the intended levels of employee engagement and commitment that are precise and effective, State-Owned Universities must investigate their value in luring professional and skilled personnel in to temporary contracts as a strategy to enhance employees' performance.
- ii. State-Owned Universities should support the professional growth of their staff members through conferences, ongoing training, community service projects, and other opportunities for lifelong learning. This will give staff members the knowledge and creative skills they need to provide evidence-based care that complies with international standards and best practices
- iii. In order to achieve high-quality service that is focused on the unique needs of students, state-owned universities should provide more opportunities for compact work weeks and encourage staff to take advantage of them. This is because organizational support elicits positive employee attitudes as a way of reciprocation.
- iv. Employees of these institutions should be encouraged to share jobs through team-based care in order to improve performance through consistent, high-quality service, employee engagement, and dedication.
- v. In order to minimize worker-life conflict and reap the benefits of flextime which has been shown to have a major impact on employee performance, State-Owned Universities ought to keep providing this kind of flexible work arrangement. This suggests that by providing flextime, students would have access to these workers' full attention and availability around the clock, even during busy times.

1.3 Limitations and Future Research

This research was aimed at ascertaining the effect of workplace flexibility on employee performance of State-owned Universities in North Central Nigeria. Nonetheless, the study made us aware of the connection between worker performance in state-owned colleges and workplace flexibility. Though efforts were made to guarantee that the research makes a substantial contribution to theory, methodology, practice, and policy, the research was carried out in state-owned universities in Nigeria's North Central States, and its findings were exposed. There are other colleges and other establishments across the nation that were overlooked. Since the operations of State-Owned Universities closely resemble those of the federal government in the nation, this restriction was lessened. Employees at these institutions also carry out similar tasks. Because of this, using state-owned universities is sufficiently representative for the study. The data gathered from respondents may reveal a certain level of confidence in the respondent, who may have their own cognitive limitations and perceptual biases when evaluating the actual state of flexible working and performance in state-owned universities. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the investigator employed pertinent scientific techniques to devise study tools, select participants, gather and examine information, and guarantee dependable outcomes.

Future studies could use qualitative research to examine the effects of workplace flexibility on worker performance in order to gather more comprehensive and diverse data and viewpoints. Future research should be done to find additional elements and moderating

factors that influence how the variables relate to one another. The current study excluded universities owned by private individuals in favor of focusing only on state-owned universities in North and Central Nigeria. These profit-driven universities ought to be investigated as well, and the results ought to be contrasted with the current study. Furthermore, the study excluded other parts of Nigeria in favor of focusing only on North and Central Nigeria. Other researchers should look into these areas as well to see if the results support the current study.

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