

Innovations

Exploring the Role of Flexible Work Arrangements in Enhancing Employee Engagement

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Abstract:

This study explores the relationship between workplace flexibility and employee engagement in selected FinTech companies in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study was grounded in social exchange theory, work/family theory, and spillover theory. Using a descriptive statistic for mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and frequency distributions, and using inferential statistical methods for regression analysis to determine the relationship between workplace flexibility and employee engagement, data were collected from 262 employees. The findings demonstrate a significant positive relationship between flexible work arrangements (such as compressed workweeks, job sharing, and flextime) and employee engagement. The study concludes that implementing flexible work practices enhances employee engagement, personal development, and job satisfaction. Recommendations for organizations include incorporating workplace flexibility into recruitment processes to boost employee satisfaction and engagement and incorporate supportive organizational policies.

Keywords: *Workplace flexibility, Employee engagement, FinTech, Nigeria, Flexible work arrangements*

Introduction

The work environment in many organisations traditionally followed a fixed type of work arrangement, commonly referred to as “9 to 5 jobs.” Employees would start work at 9 am and end at 5 pm throughout the week, reducing the time available for personal pursuits, family, and other activities. This rigid work environment negatively impacted employees' lives and their engagement at work. Farida and Setiawan (2022) noted that organisations have long focused on developing strategies and policies to outperform competitors and maximize profit, often neglecting employee well-being. Obi (2015) emphasized that the primary aim of any

organisation is to maximize profit, which cannot be achieved without proper investment in human capital. The relationship between organisational flexibility and employee engagement has gained significant research attention in the ever-changing modern workplace (Lee, Chong & Ojo, 2024).

Employee engagement has become central to modern Human Resource (HR) practices, aiming to foster ongoing organisational involvement and motivation among employees. High levels of employee engagement are associated with strong citizenship behaviours, enhanced task dedication, business innovation, and employee happiness (Yaakobi & Weisberg, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted traditional work systems, highlighting the need for flexible internal control mechanisms to address such crises (Abdallah & Abdallah, 2020).

Understanding the impact of flexible work arrangements on employee engagement has become increasingly crucial for organisations navigating a fast-paced and competitive business environment (Abdulwasiiu & Ibrahim, 2023). Workplace flexibility has gained attention as companies adapt to modern workforce needs, potentially increasing employee satisfaction, personal development, well-being, and recognition, leading to a better work-life balance. Budriene and Diskiene (2020) defined employee engagement as the increase in worker motivation, active participation, and involvement in production processes, positively impacting labour efficiency. Flexible work practices have become popular over the past decade, implemented by well-known private organisations like Google and Facebook (Amy, 2021).

Employee engagement is well-recognized for improving both individual and organisational productivity and performance (Amah & Sese, 2018). Satata (2021) described employee engagement as a state of mind and body connected to work, aiding organisations in achieving their objectives. In Nigeria, many organisations do not focus on employee engagement. Hembadoon, Mnena, Abdullahi, and Tersoo (2021) highlighted that ineffective management of organisational resources, particularly human resources, has led to a declining performance in Nigeria's manufacturing industry. Poor employee engagement is a primary cause of this poor performance.

Amah (2018) identified factors influencing employee engagement, including internal relationships, leadership behaviour, and the work environment created by leaders. In the FinTech industry, managers, as primary decision-makers, have the authority to establish strategic objectives, allocate resources, and initiate organisational change (Azam, Siddiqui & Yosufzai, 2023). Employee engagement is proposed to bridge knowledge-based and technical components, effectively translating their advantages into increased competitiveness in the FinTech industry.

The primary objective is to examine the impact of workplace flexibility on employee engagement within selected FinTech companies in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study

aims to identify prevalent flexible work arrangements, assess their influence on employee engagement and understand the associated benefits and challenges from both employee and employer perspectives.

Workplace Flexibility

Workplace flexibility can be referred to as offering options and adjustments for employees regarding where, when, and how they can work. It allows workers the freedom to modify their work hours, locations, and arrangements to better suit their obligations and demands while still completing employment standards. Flexibility in the workplace entails working remotely (Yogiana& Riana, 2023; Sangarandeniya& Ranasinghe, 2020). According to Ogueyungbo, *et al.* (2019), flexible work arrangements incorporate a variety of formal and informal workplace practices intended to accommodate employees' life goals, particularly in Nigeria.

Joseph, Amanawa, and Uelee, (2023), introduced gender into their definition of workplace flexibility, it was viewed as a setting in which managers and staff members of both genders are equally empowered to determine the start and finish of their workdays. This implies that flexible work schedules are provided to supervisors and employees of all genders. According to Olusoji (2023), employers who offer flexible work arrangements are assisting staff members in balancing their professional and personal obligations, which has helped them "sustain" their personnel.

Various Forms of Workplace Flexibility

The goal of workplace flexibility is to promote a better balance between work and personal life, enhance employee satisfaction and well-being, and improve organisational effectiveness. There are different workplace flexibility arrangements according to Ogueyungbo, *et al.* (2019); Joseph (2023); Sangarandeniya and Ranasinghe (2020).

- i. **Flexi-Time:** It fosters an environment where employees can give their all at work by offering flexible work schedules, which enhances employee well-being and happiness and ultimately reduces absence.
- ii. **Telecommuting:** Permits workers to work from a place other than the typical workplace, sometimes from home.
- iii. **Sub-contracting or Outsourcing:** Here, a contract worker is used to complete a certain duty. Through subcontracting, qualified staff members can be used for a set amount of time. Among these workers are full-time staff members of major establishments.
- iv. **Part-Time:** This could also be a contract for irregular part-time work when hours are adjusted to accommodate other ongoing commitments.

- v. **Shift Work:** When working shifts, employees typically operate in teams; these teams consist of individual employees.
- vi. **Mobile Working:** Employees who work remotely from their employers' offices receive instructions by phone or computer when they are mobile.
- vii. **Job Sharing:** It involves splitting up the duties of a full-time job among two or more workers, allowing them to work fewer hours each.
- viii. **Compressed Work Weeks/Hours:** Instead of the usual eight hours per day over five days, it enables employees to finish their allotted hours over a shorter period, such as 10 hours per day over four days or 80 hours over nine days.
- ix. **Hot-Desking:** Employees using the hot-desking method do not have designated workstations. When they are in the office, they must utilize any desk or a desk that is available inside a designated area.
- x. **Moonlighting:** In this case, companies agree to give a bonus to a worker who offers to accept a second position inside the same company.
- xi. **Overtime:** Overtime refers to the hours that workers work beyond their regular workdays. This might be either required or voluntary.
- xii. **Home Working:** All or a portion of the employees' responsibilities, tasks, and duties are completed on their property.
- xiii. **Annualized Hours:** With this approach, an employee can alter their weekly or daily work schedule while maintaining the total amount of hours they must work in a year.
- xiv. **Paid Parental Leave:** Paid parental leave is a workplace policy that provides employees with compensation during time off following the birth or adoption of a child.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is vital for organisational success, characterized by the extent of an employee's emotional dedication to their company and its objectives. Employees who are engaged tend to exceed expectations in their roles, showing enhanced productivity, creativity, and loyalty. Amah (2018) states that engaged employees exhibit strong citizenship behaviours, actively contribute to business goals, and are generally happier in their roles. Some of the determinants of employee engagement are

- i. **Job Satisfaction:** Employees who find satisfaction in their job roles and responsibilities are more likely to be engaged.
- ii. **Recognition:** Regular acknowledgement and appreciation of employees' efforts contribute significantly to their engagement levels.

- iii. **Opportunities for Growth:** Providing employees with opportunities for professional development and career advancement keeps them motivated and engaged.
- iv. **Work-Life Balance:** Flexible work arrangements enable employees to achieve a healthy balance between their professional and personal lives, leading to higher engagement (Yaakobi & Weisberg, 2020).

Social Exchange, Work/Family Spillover and Theory

The study was grounded in Social Exchange Theory, Work/Family Theory, and Spillover Theory, which collectively suggest that flexible work arrangements lead to higher employee engagement through reciprocal benefits (Amah, 2018). According to the Social Exchange Theory (SET), social behaviour results from an exchange process in which people try to get the most out of and incur the fewest costs from their relationships. According to this theory, reciprocal exchanges of resources, such as time, effort, and rewards form the foundation of the relationship between employers and employees in the workplace (Blau, 1964). When organisations offer workplace flexibility, they provide a valuable resource to employees. According to SET, employees are likely to reciprocate by increasing their level of engagement, commitment, and performance. This reciprocity can manifest in several ways:

- i. **Increased Job Satisfaction:** Flexible work arrangements can lead to higher job satisfaction, which in turn enhances employee engagement (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001).
- ii. **Increased Loyalty:** Workers are more likely to feel devoted to the company and loyal to it if they believe their employer is understanding and supportive of their personal needs (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).
- iii. **Greater Discretionary Effort:** According to Shore *et al.* (2006), engaged workers are more likely to go above and beyond the requirements of their formal positions, which benefits the success of the company.

According to Eisenberger *et al.* (2001), employee engagement and performance are positively correlated with perceived organisational support, a crucial element of SET. Also, Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), demonstrated that employees reciprocate favourable treatment from employers with increased engagement and loyalty. Shore *et al.* (2006), showed that social exchanges in the workplace are critical for fostering high levels of employee engagement.

Work/Family Theory explores the interaction between work and family roles and how these roles influence each other. The theory suggests that the integration or conflict between work and family responsibilities significantly impacts an individual's well-being and performance in both domains (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Workplace flexibility can help mitigate enabling workers to more effectively balance their personal and professional obligations and can help reduce work-family conflict. Key aspects of this theory as it relates to workplace flexibility include:

- i. *Role Integration*: Flexible work arrangements can facilitate better integration of work and family roles, reducing stress and enhancing overall well-being (Clark, 2000).
- ii. *Work-Family Balance*: Employees who successfully manage their work and personal lives are more likely to be involved and productive at work (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007).
- iii. *Reduced Role Conflict*: Flexibility in the workplace can reduce role conflict, where demands from work and family are incompatible, thereby improving employee engagement (Frone *et al.*, 1997).

Spillover Theory suggests that encounters in one area of life can spill over to another domain, affecting an individual's overall well-being and performance. This theory suggests that positive or negative experiences at work can influence personal life and vice versa (Staines, 1980).

Workplace flexibility can create positive spillover effects by enhancing employees' personal and professional lives. Key components of this theory as it relates to workplace flexibility include:

- i. *Positive Spillover*: Flexible work arrangements can lead to positive experiences at work, which reflect into personal life, creating a virtuous cycle of well-being and engagement (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000).
- ii. *Negative Spillover Reduction*: By reducing work-related stress and providing better work-life balance, flexible work practices can minimize negative spillover from work to personal life, thereby enhancing employee engagement (Hammer *et al.*, 2005).
- iii. *Overall Life Satisfaction*: Employees who experience positive spillover are more likely to report higher overall life satisfaction, which in turn fosters greater engagement at work (Judge & Watanabe, 1993).

Methods

The data were initially analysed using descriptive statistics to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the distribution of responses across different variables. Measures such as mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and frequency distributions were employed to provide an overview of the dataset. The study collected data using structured questionnaires distributed to 262 respondents, consisting of employees of selected fintech companies in Nigeria. The questionnaires were designed to capture various dimensions of workplace flexibility and their perceived impact on employee engagement. The significance of the

regression coefficients was tested using the p-value approach, with a significance level set at 0.05. The R-squared value was also reported to indicate the proportion of variance in employee engagement that can be explained by workplace flexibility. To determine the relationship between workplace flexibility and employee engagement, the study used inferential statistical methods, particularly regression analysis. This technique was applied to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between the independent variables (forms of workplace flexibility) and the dependent variable (employee engagement).

Results

Demography

Table 1 shows the demography of the respondents under study. Gender of the study participants, 56.49% (148) are males while 43.51% (114) are females. The results show that 12.98% (34) of the respondents are below the age of 20, 30.15% (79) are between the age bracket of 21- 30, 36.26% (95) are within the 31 – 40 years, 12.60% (33) falls within the 41 – 50 age brackets, while 8% (21) of the respondents are above 50 years of age. In regards to the position of staff of respondents in the sample of this study, 12.2% (32) of the respondents are interns, 33.2% (87) are Junior staff, 46.6% (122) are Senior staff, while 8.0% (21) of the respondents represent the managerial arm of the two companies in this study. Of the years of experience, 16.03% (42) of the respondents have less than one year of experience, 27.86% (73) of the respondents have above one to five years of experience, 38.17% (100) of the respondents have between six and ten years of experience, 11.45% (30) of the respondents have between eleven to fifteen years, while 6.49% (17) of the respondents have over fifteen years of experience. The duration of years spent by workers in the two organisations considered for this study. 13.74% of the respondents have spent less than a year with the companies, 27.86% of the respondents have spent one to two years with the organisations, 36.26% of the respondents have spent three to five years with the companies, 15.65% of the participants in this study have spent six to eight years with the companies, while 6.49 have spent over eight years with the two organisations in this study.

Variation	Levels	Frequenc y	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulativ e Percent
Gender	Male	148	56.5	56.5	56.5
	Female	114	43.5	43.5	100.0
	Total	262	100.0	100.0	
Age	Below 20	34	13.0	13.0	13.0
	21 – 30 years	79	30.2	30.2	43.1
	31 – 40 years	95	36.3	36.3	79.4
	41 - 50 years	33	12.6	12.6	92.0
	Over 50 years	21	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	262	100.0	100.0	
Position	Intern	32	12.2	12.2	12.2
	Junior staff	87	33.2	33.2	45.4
	Senior staff	122	46.6	46.6	92.0
	Management	21	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	262	100.0	100.0	
Years of experience	Less than 1 year	42	16.0	16.0	16.0
	1 - 5 years	73	27.9	27.9	43.9
	6 - 10 years	100	38.2	38.2	82.1
	11 - 15 years	30	11.5	11.5	93.5
	Over 15 years	17	6.5	6.5	100.0
	Total	262	100.0	100.0	
Years spent in the company	Less than 1 year	36	13.7	13.7	13.7
	1-2 years	73	27.9	27.9	41.6
	3 – 5 years	95	36.3	36.3	77.9
	6 – 8 years	41	15.6	15.6	93.5
	Over 8 years	17	6.5	6.5	100.0
	Total	262	100.0	100.0	

Table 1: (Source: Researchers compilation [IBM SPSS 20 / Descriptive statistics])

Demographic data of respondents and frequency distributions regarding workplace flexibility and employee engagement were analysed. The study found a high prevalence of flexible work arrangements and a strong positive correlation with employee engagement (Farida & Setiawan, 2022).

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
GENDER	262	1	2	1.44	.497
AGE	262	1	5	2.73	1.094
POSITION	262	1	4	2.50	.811
YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	262	1	5	2.65	1.083
DURATIONWITHCOMPANY	262	1	5	2.73	1.085
TER1	262	1	5	2.28	1.153
TER2	262	1	5	2.05	1.023
TER3	262	1	4	1.90	.769
EMR1	262	1	5	2.03	.954
EMR2	262	1	5	1.97	1.030
EMR3	262	1	5	2.48	1.256
CWW1	262	1	5	2.45	1.396
CWW2	262	1	5	1.91	1.063
CWW3	262	1	5	2.11	1.050
PD1	262	1	5	2.36	1.242
PD2	262	1	5	2.12	1.017
PD3	262	1	5	2.18	1.201
JS1	262	1	5	1.93	1.127
JS2	262	1	5	2.35	1.355
JS3	262	1	5	2.15	1.006
JOS1	262	1	5	2.28	1.204
JOS2	262	1	5	2.00	1.010
JOS3	262	1	5	2.24	1.333
FLT1	262	1	5	2.10	1.044
FLT2	262	1	5	1.98	1.181
FLT3	262	1	5	1.87	1.031
WLB1	262	1	5	2.13	1.306
WLB2	262	1	5	2.08	1.071
WLB3	262	1	5	1.97	1.041
Valid N (listwise)	262				

Table 2: (Source: Researcher's Compilation[IBM SPSS 20 / Descriptive statistics])

Table 2 shows the minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation of demographic data obtained from 262 respondents and the maximum, minimum, mean and standard deviation of the research items and variables used for this research work. The instruments used were above the 0.6 threshold value through Cronbach's Alpha and this is an indication that the items and their constructs have internal consistency and therefore merit further analysis. Hence, no item or construct needs to be eliminated in further analysis. Significant positive relationships were identified between various forms of workplace flexibility which are telecommuting, flexi-time, compressed work week, job sharing and employee engagement, affirming the hypotheses (Abdulwasiu & Ibrahim, 2023). The results indicate that flexible work arrangements significantly enhance employee engagement, aligning with Social Exchange Theory. Employees with flexible schedules reported higher job satisfaction and personal development (Yaakobi & Weisberg, 2020; Amah & Sese, 2018).

Discussion

The study explored the relationship between workplace flexibility and employee engagement across various sectors. Key findings indicated that flexible work arrangements positively influence employee engagement. Flexible work arrangements lead to higher job satisfaction as employees can better manage their personal and professional responsibilities. This finding aligns with Budriene and Diskiene (2020), who found that IT professionals with flexible schedules reported higher satisfaction levels. Employees with the ability to work flexibly often experience reduced stress levels. Yaakobi and Weisberg (2020) highlighted that healthcare professionals benefitted from flexible work arrangements by experiencing less stress and burnout. Employees with flexibility can work during their most productive hours, leading to increased overall productivity. Amah and Sese (2018) observed that financial services employees who telecommuted showed higher productivity rates.

Impact of Employee Engagement

- i. **Higher Productivity:** Engaged employees tend to be more productive, as they are motivated to contribute to their organisation's success (Amah & Sese, 2018).
- ii. **Lower Absenteeism:** High engagement levels correlate with reduced absenteeism, as employees demonstrate greater commitment to their work.
- iii. **Improved Organisational Performance:** Organisations with engaged employees often experience better overall performance, as their workforce is more dedicated and innovative (Budriene & Diskiene, 2020).

Challenges of Implementing Workplace Flexibility

Although the advantages of workplace flexibility are evident, organisations may encounter several challenges in implementing these practices, including:

- i. **Management Resistance:** Some managers may oppose flexible work arrangements due to worries about maintaining productivity and control.
- ii. **Communication Issues:** If not effectively managed, remote work and flexible schedules can result in communication difficulties.
- iii. **Equity Concerns:** Ensuring equal access to flexible work options for all employees can be challenging, especially for roles that require physical presence.

Conclusion

Workplace flexibility options such as telecommuting, flexible hours, and job sharing have been shown to significantly improve employee engagement. Employees who can manage their work schedules experience higher job satisfaction, reduced stress, and increased productivity. According to Budriene and Diskiene (2020), employees in the IT sector reported higher engagement levels when provided with flexible work arrangements. Despite the benefits, workplace flexibility can present challenges such as communication issues, feelings of isolation, and difficulties in maintaining work-life boundaries. Yaakobi and Weisberg (2020) noted that healthcare professionals often face challenges in coordination and communication, which could negatively impact engagement if not properly addressed.

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