

## **FLEXIBLE WORK HOUR AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE ON PERFORMANCE OF FOOD FIRMS IN PORT HARCOURT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The study aimed to examine the impact of flexible work hour on employee performance in food firms in Port Harcourt. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of 118 staff of four (4) fast food firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The simple random sampling procedure was adopted. The Taro Yamane's formula was used to determine the sample size for the study. A sample size of 91 respondents was obtained. The instrument for data collection in the study was a questionnaire. To determine the reliability of the instrument a test re-test statistical procedure was carried and a reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained. The study found a positive significant relationship between flexible work hour and commitment, effectiveness and job satisfaction. In conclusion therefore, based on the objectives and the findings of this study; Stress management strategies were found to have greater influence on the performance of employees in the fast food firms. Flexibility in work hour is cost-effective and efficient way which also helps in savings on overheads cost and reduces the expenses, gain competitiveness and also improve employee performance. The study finally recommended that the management of the organization under study should create awareness to the employees to enable them be aware of utilization of stress management strategies available in the organization that can result in improved performance.*

**Keywords: Flexible Work Hour, Employee Performance, Commitment**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In today's world, stress has become a wide spread phenomenon, which occurs in various forms in every workplace or society. In today's work life, employees are generally working for longer hours, as the rising levels of responsibilities require them to exert themselves even more strenuously to meet rising expectations about work performance. Coupled with this phenomenon is the level and style of competition that is growing day by day thus further increasing the levels of stress among employees exponentially. Besides the determination of most employees to live in city centres and have modernized style of living has further compounded the problem of stress among employees. The global financial crisis and recession of 2008 further contributed in mounting higher levels of stress among employees. In order to make organizations efficient and effective in the utilization of resources, many enterprises have gone through entire restructuring, layoffs, downsizing, and mergers to maintain their position in the market. This has resulted in unstable employee-employer relationship which has caused a great deal of stress among employees and researches seem to suggest that high levels of stress seriously affect employee's job performance and commitment towards organizations. Among nearly three billion people globally who are employed, many are confronted with incessant and challenging problems in their organizations called stress, which has the potential to influence employee's performance and efficiency. O'Meara (2008), described occupational stress as the adverse psychological and physical reactions that occur in an individual as a result of their being unable to cope with the demands being made on them. According to Swinepoxes et al. (1998), work related stress has been a topic that has received increasing attention, in the area of occupational health, over the last three decades. These authors were of the opinion that the world, especially the world of work and business, has become increasingly subject to fast changing forces like increased competition, the pressure of quality, innovation and an increase in the pace of doing business. Participation in formal arrangements that involve

flexitime promotes a sense among workers that they have the discretion to fit job-related responsibilities into their broader lives, and this discretion contributes to less stress and burnout. A study of more than 19,000 employees at nine distinct companies (in the pharmaceutical, technical, manufacturing, financial, and professional services sectors and in a university) showed that stress and burnout was lower among workers engaged in all types of workplace flexibility arrangements. Similarly, a study of employees in a large multinational company found that greater levels of flexibility were associated with better health: that is, with less self-reported stress and strain, and better physical health (Hira & Anam, 2012). Opportunities for growth and development help employees expand their knowledge, skills and abilities, and apply the competencies they have gained to new situations. The opportunity to gain new skills and experiences can increase employee motivation and job satisfaction and help workers more effectively manage job stress. This can translate into positive gains for the organization by enhancing organizational effectiveness and improving work quality, as well as by helping the organization attract and retain top-quality employees. By providing opportunities for growth and development, organizations can improve the quality of their employees' work experience and realize the benefits of developing workers to their full potential.

Meditation has been used by many to relieve stress and achieve a more peaceful sense of well-being. Its many benefits such as lowered blood pressure, lowered pulse rate, and increased alpha brain waves (associated with relaxation), can be easily measured. Progressive deep muscle relaxation is based on the premise that anxiety and relaxation are mutually exclusive; anxiety can't be experienced when the muscles are relaxed. The procedure contrasts tension with relaxation. A person first tenses a set of muscles to recognize the tense sensation. When he lets those muscles relax, he's asked to become aware of the internal feeling and difference between tension and relaxation. The focus of this exercise is gross muscle groups throughout the body, including the forehead, eyes, nose, face, tongue, jaws, lips, neck, right arm, left arm, right leg, left leg, upper back, chest, stomach, buttocks, and thighs. Autogenic relaxation promotes relaxation through mental imagery. Verbal somatic suggestions help a person concentrate on specific parts of the body. Training includes

### **Hypotheses**

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** there is no significant relationship between flexible work hour and employee commitment of selected food manufacturers in Port Harcourt

**HO<sub>2</sub>:** there is no significant relationship between flexibility hour and employee effectiveness of selected food manufacturers in Port Harcourt

**HO<sub>3</sub>:** there is no significant relationship between flexibility hour and job satisfaction of selected food manufacturers in Port Harcourt

### **Commitment**

No organisation in today's competitive world can perform at peak levels unless each employee is committed to the organisation's objectives and works as an effective team member. It is no longer good enough to have employees who come to work faithfully everyday and do their jobs independently. Employees now have to think like entrepreneurs while working in teams, and have to prove their worth. However, they also want to be part of a successful organisation which provides a good income and the opportunity for development and secure employment.

In the past, organisations secured the loyalty of their employees by guaranteeing job security. However, many organisations have responded to competitive pressures by downsizing, restructuring and transformation and thus created a less secure organisational climate. A growing number of employees therefore feel that they are victims of broken promises. One of the challenges facing modern organisations involves maintaining employee commitment in the

current business environment. This organisations can achieve by developing a new "work contract". In today's workplace, employees face more ambiguity in their daily activities and decreased job security (Bergmann, Lester, De Meuse & Grahn, 2000). With no assurance of continued employment, workers have now raised their expectations in other areas. For instance, employees expect employers to demonstrate their commitment in terms of pleasant working conditions, access to training and development, provision of a safe working environment and a balance between work and employees' commitments outside the workplace.

Organisations are faced with ever-increasing competition and as they prepare for new challenges, one of the key components of survival is maintaining and upgrading the organisation's ability to use human resources effectively and efficiently. According to Katz (1964), employee behaviour essential for organisational effectiveness includes employees (1) entering and remaining with the organisation, (2) carrying out specific role requirements, and (3) engaging in innovative and spontaneous activity that goes beyond role prescriptions. The appointment of good workers is thus critical, but of even greater significance is the organisation's ability to create a committed workforce. Hence the need for managers to understand the concept of commitment - what it is, how it operates, and most importantly, which behaviours are displayed by employees committed to the organisation. The importance of employee commitment is quite evident if one considers prior research into the relationship between commitment and job satisfaction (Bateman & Organ, 1983), workplace justice (Moorman, Niehoff & Organ, 1992), trust in and loyalty to the leader (Deluga, 1994) and perceptions of supervisor fairness (Niehoff & Moorman, 1993).

### **Flexible Work hour**

A flexible schedule allows an employee to work hours that differ from the normal company start and stop time. Particularly in an environment for exempt employees, those hours are generally 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. or 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. and tallied, they total a 40-hour work week. (Any regularly scheduled work hours allow an extra hour for lunch whether the employee takes the time or not.) In the past, flexibility has meant that an employee might work 7 a.m. - 4 p.m. every day as an option that gave the employee an extra hour in the morning in exchange for losing an hour in the late afternoon. But, today's employees demand more from their employers and especially the Millennial employees. They require different options for flexible schedules and even flexible schedules that can change based on their need for flexibility in their lives at any given time. So, for example, an employee might want a flexible work schedule, not every day but on days when children have doctor's appointments, when classrooms have parental helper opportunities, or when attending annual medical appointments for themselves.

In a non-exempt workplace, often industrial, production, warehousing, or customer facing such as retail, medical care giving, grocery, and service stations, a flexible schedule depends on the amount of interdependence required in the work. A nurse who works the afternoon shift will have trouble exercising flexibility, for example, if he can't find another employee to cover his shift. A flexible schedule is also dependent on employee availability to cover all aspects of the job and all hours of the day during which a business makes products or serves customers.

### **Employer Expectations in a Flexible Workplace Environment**

In all flexible schedules, the employer expects a full-time employee to work the required hours or more. A flexible schedule involves either a compressed work week or flexible starting and stopping times. In a compressed work week, the most common flexible schedule is a four-day workweek in which employees work four ten-hour days. (Variations on this flexible schedule exist including twelve-hour work days but this is not recommended.) This flexible schedule allows employees to have an additional day for any activity that affords the employee more work-life balance. In a twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week operation, employees may choose to take Sunday.

Monday, Tuesday off or any three days to meet their desired schedule. Employers will want to see that workstations are covered when they need to operate while still allowing employee flexibility.

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### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study.

#### **Population of the Study**

The population of the study comprises of four (4) fast food firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The fast food manufacturers under study includes; Genesis Fast Food & Restaurant, Jevinik Restaurant, The Promise and Pepperoni Foods Limited. Hence, the population of study are 118 employees from the selected fast food manufacturers in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

#### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The simple random sampling procedure was adopted. Simple random sampling is a sampling technique where every item in the population has an even chance and likelihood of being selected in the sample.

**Method of Data Analysis**

The statistical tool was used in the analysis and computing the numerical variables; Section A will be analysed using frequency and percentages.

The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman rank Correlation at 0.05 significant level. The rule for acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses is given below;

**Testing of Hypotheses**

The hypotheses stated in chapter one (1) was tested with spearman rank order correlation. Ten (10) hypotheses were raised and the spearman rank correlation was used to measure the significance of hypothesized variables.

**Decision: if sig = p > 0.05** the hypothesis is rejected

If sig = p ≤ 0.05 the hypothesis is accepted.

**Hypothesis 1**

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between flexible work hour and employee commitment of selected food firms in Port Harcourt

**Table 4.12 Correlation between Flexible Work Hour and Commitment**

Flexible Work Hour	Commitment		
Spearman's rho	Flexible	Correlation	1.000
Work		Coef	.505*
Hour		ficie	
		nt	
Sig. (2-tailed)			.000
N			82
Commitment			82
			1.000
		Correl	.505*
ation Coefficient			
Sig. (2-tailed)			.000
N			82
			82

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

The hypothesis testing results shows that the probability value is 0.000 which is less than the critical value of 0.05. The null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypotheses is accepted which states that,

**HA<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant relationship between flexible work hour and employee commitment of selected food firms in Port Harcourt.

Again, the correlation coefficient of 0.505 shows the strength of relationship between flexible work hour and employee commitment is very moderate.

**Hypothesis 2**

The hypothesis testing results shows that the probability value is 0.000 which is less than the critical value of 0.05. The null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypotheses is accepted which states that,

**HO<sub>2</sub>:** there is no significant relationship between flexibility hour and employee effectiveness of selected food firms in Port Harcourt.

### Correlation between Flexible Work Hour and Effectiveness

Flexible Work Hour		Effectiveness		
Spearman's rho	Flexible	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.583*
Work				
Hour				
Sig. (2-tailed)			.	.000
N			82	82
Effectiveness		Correlation Coefficient	.583*	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	.
N			82	82

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

**HA<sub>2</sub>:** There is a significant relationship between flexible work hour and employee Effectiveness of selected food firms in Port Harcourt. Again, the correlation coefficient of 0.583 shows the strength of relationship between flexible work hour and employee Effectiveness is very moderate.

### Hypothesis 3

**HO<sub>3</sub>:** there is no significant relationship between flexibility hour and job satisfaction of selected food firms in Port Harcourt. critical value of 0.05. The null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypotheses is accepted which states that,

**HA<sub>3</sub>:** There is a significant relationship between flexible work hour and Job Satisfaction of selected food firms in Port Harcourt.

### Correlation between Flexible Work Hour and Job Satisfaction

Flexible Work Hour		Job Satisfaction		
Spearman's rho	Flexible	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.674*
Work				
Hour				
Sig. (2-tailed)			.	.000
N			82	82
Job Satisfaction		Correlation Coefficient	.674*	1.000
Coefficient				
Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	.
N			82	82

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

The hypothesis testing results shows that the probability value is 0.000 which is less than the Again, the correlation coefficient of 0.674 shows the strength of relationship between flexible

work hour and Job Satisfaction is very moderate.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the objectives and the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made that stress management strategies The study also concluded that relaxation has a positive effect on employee performance as it makes them more committed, gives them job satisfaction and make them more effective after relaxation time. A workplace thoughtfully designed to include relaxation or "recharge rooms," can have a significant effect on employee satisfaction and performance.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. The study recommended that the management of the organization under study should create awareness to the employees to enable them be aware of utilization of stress management strategies available in the organization that can result in improved performance.
2. organizations should consider how the arrangements would impact your work and the work of your colleagues and include their feedback and needs in your considerations
3. Evaluate the employee's physical ability and health issues, if there are any, to decide to what extent can he perform the job, in addition, evaluate the employee's present and past psychological state to decide if he or she has the mental ability to actually start or even continue the tasks.

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