

**WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY AND ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OF
TELECOMMUNICATION COMPANIES IN PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE**

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between remote working and organisational effectiveness of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The study adopted the descriptive research design. Krejcie and Morgan sample size was used to obtain a sample size of eighty-six (86) from a population of one hundred and seventeen (117) managers of six (6) telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. After validation by the supervisors and other experts, cronbach alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument. Out of one hundred and seven (117) copies of the questionnaire administered, a total of eighty (80) copies (representing 93%) were retrieved. Mean and standard deviation were used for the univariate analysis; Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used for the bivariate analysis, while the multivariate analysis was done using Partial Correlation. Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used in testing the hypotheses one to nine, while partial correlation was adopted in testing hypothesis ten formulated for the study, at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that a significant positive relationship exists between remote working and organisational effectiveness in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The study concluded that managers of telecommunication companies should give attention to employees' flexibility so as remote working hours so as to maximize the potential and energy of employees. The researcher therefore recommended amongst others that remote working should be enabled and put into place in a way that both the company and the employees may get the most from them, organization should engage in the act of job rotation in other to discover the skills and talents of their workforce.

Keywords: Remote Working, Organisationa; Effectiveness, Goal Accomplishment

INTRODUCTION

Many scholars think that an organization's success is dependent on its personnel being content, motivated, and creative in their efforts to fulfill the organization's goals; and that managers should be able to bring people's competencies from possibility to reality in this instance. One of the strategic responsibilities of organisation is to adopt particular strategies to establish an atmosphere conducive to the development of employees' skills and abilities. According to studies, when senior management embraces change, low and middle managers' readiness to enact change and be persuaded of the necessity for transformation should be acknowledged. For the objective of achieving optimal performance, organizational efficiency is linked to the fulfillment of infinite demands from stakeholders, continuous sustainability within the industry, and sustained retaining of skilled employees. Jackson (2007) avers that the staff is the foremost valuable asset that organizations have in hand. These workers are however regularly burdened with the dilemma of distributing their time among several competing needs like visiting family issues, socio-political events, and many other activities that sometimes conflict with organizational goals. This instance often creates work-life conflict for some workers whose private life is threatened by the disparity within the time they invest in their work as against the clock spent reception. The resultant effect affects the organization, the individual employee, and society holistically (Fapohunda, 2014).

The emergence of Covid 19 opened organisations up to the possibility of employees working at home or working part time and still giving their best skills thereby saving cost. While some

organisations benefited from the lock down others struggle to survive and on the other hand, employees lost their jobs and means of survival.

Organisations sometimes often ignored the importance of the employees in the organisation and this has led them to so many fallouts affecting productivity level, employee performance, customer's patronage and the organisations gross profit. The inability of the organisation like telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt has treated the employees as machines that can be used without proper care other than assets has led to the employees been stressed and worn out then become more of fatigue which has resulted to low inputs and productivity level. Often times telecommunications have experience backdrops in their services to their customers as a result of poor employees' services and this has a gross effect on the company. This study seeks to examine how both employees and employers through a remote working environment reach achieve their goals.

Research hypotheses

For the purpose of this research, the following null hypotheses were posed:

Ho₁: there is no significant relationship between remote working and organisational goal accomplishment in telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.

Ho₂: there is no significant relationship between remote working and organisational resource acquisition in telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.

Ho₃: there is no significant relationship between remote working and organisational internal processes in telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.

Remote Working

Remote working is an alternative work arrangement in which employees performs tasks elsewhere that are normally done in a primary or central workplace, for at least some portion of their work schedule, using electronic media to interact with others inside and outside the organization (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). In investigating the psychological mediators and individual consequences of telecommuting, Gajendran and Harrison (2007) constructed a theoretical framework and meta-analysis of 46 studies. They found that remote working had small (but mainly beneficial) effects on such outcomes as perceived autonomy and work-family conflict. Similar to the findings of Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, and Neuman. (1999), they found that the effects of telecommuting were related to their degree (or intensity) with some negative effects on workplace relations for higher intensity levels of remote working. They also discovered that increased job satisfaction and lower turnover intent and role stress were associated with this type of work arrangement. Telecommuting, also known as remote work or telework, with the help of information and technological devices helps employees, to perform their work in different places instead of the central workplace. Telecommuting can be part-time or full-time, with the part-time predominant in recent years. Telecommuting has advantages at the individual, organizational and societal level (Allen, golden & Shockley, 2015). A flexible working that permits an employee to work from a location other than just the main office is known as remote work. For employees who can accomplish task outside their environment, this structure can help ensure work-life balance, access to proper opportunities, or lower commuting costs. Organizational benefits include improved employee satisfaction and retention, higher productivity, and cost savings on raw materials. Remote job can be performed on a part-time or full-time, and on a regular or irregular basis (Bailey & Kurland, 2002).

Organisational effectiveness

The effectiveness of an organization is a key concern to management and for employees. It is more or less depends on the management, the way they organize staff and manage their human capital. Organizational effectiveness is described as a "necessary form of disciplined self-flagellation than a pursuit of happiness" (March & Sutton, cited in Itishree & Rabindra 2014). In the same vein, Rogers and Wright, (cited in Itishree & Rabindra 2014) has stated that modern organizations are dependent

on complex systems and the knowledge of their employees where organizational effectiveness refers to the degree to which the actual outcomes of the organization match those outcomes necessary for the organization to attain its goals and objectives. It is the role of human resource managers to keep an eye on their employees and keep the door open for the talent flexibility which may result organizational effectiveness. Organizational effectiveness is "a company's long term ability to achieve consistently its strategic and operational goals" (Fallon & Brinkerhoff, cited in Itishree & Rabindra 2014). Organizational effectiveness is the ability of an organization to mobilize its centre of power, for action, production and adaptation Mott (2018). He has developed a model for measuring organizational effectiveness which includes (a) goal attainment which is productivity (b) internal health which is adaptability; and (c) resource acquisition which is efficiency. Employee performance is one of the dimensions of organizational effectiveness. If employees will perform better it will contribute to overall effectiveness of the organization. Employee performance is measured in terms of their commitment towards organization, willingness to change and to learn new skills. Some of the important factors which are related to individual performance are creativity, leadership, integrity, attendance and cooperation. Another sub-dimension of employee performance is how effectively and quickly the employees solve the problems they face, which refers to their problem-solving skill. Some other factors which will be taken for measuring employees' performance is their ability to handle multiple types of tasks, and how much they are team oriented. The second dimension of organizational effectiveness is productivity of the organization. And the final one is financial performance of the organization. Likewise the effects of productivity, profitability, and cost-efficiency upon the organization will be taken for measuring organization's financial performance.

Remote working and organisational effectiveness

"remote working" is also productive working time, as more and more enterprises are recognizing that promoting a healthy "work-life balance" for their employees isn't just the "right thing" to do, but that such an approach can also serve as an effective competitiveness strategy. Enterprise policies and practices that seek to promote "remote working" can benefit businesses in a number of different ways, such as through increased productivity; reduced rates of absenteeism and staff turnover; and improved employee attitudes and morale, which can in turn translate into a better "bottom line". There is longstanding evidence that links reductions in working hours to increased productivity (output per hour worked). Such productivity gains result not only from physiological factors such as reduced fatigue, but also from an improvement in employee attitudes and morale (white, cited in international labour office (ILO, 2007). Improving working time arrangements can have productivity enhancing effects, which are similar to the effects of higher wages. With such changes, workers can improve their mental and physical health and thus be more rested and alert during working hours, thereby improving labour productivity. For example, it is known that the physiological effects of long working hours include a reduction of the pace of work or work intensity. Thus, the extension of working hours may not yield the expected increases in total output, but instead lead to a reduction of total output in the long-run, while the reduction of working hours can increase labour productivity without causing physically harmful consequences for workers. There is substantial empirical evidence that reductions in "excessively" long hours of work – typically linked with changes in work organization, methods of production and similar factors – have resulted in substantial productivity gains over the years (Bosch & Lehndorff, cited in ILO 2007). As long hours of work are also positively related to absenteeism, reducing such long hours can also provide firms with benefits in terms of reduced rates of absenteeism (Barmby et al., 2002).

Using 200 usable responses in telecommunication industry Abid and Barech (2017) found a positive linkage between working from home and quality of life for employees. They also found that proper use of remote working practice can be a source of job satisfaction also. They argue that in long run, remote working is beneficial for both organizations as well for employees. Moreover, among varied benefits of remote working some of the prominent benefits that could emerge include: increase in labour capacity, increase in productivity, decrease in recruitment costs etc. While

examining the work flexibility it is important to consider whether the flexibility is rigorously pursued by the employer or employee because it can have varied outcomes. As mentioned earlier, when the flexibility leads to increase in number of working hours when production can be enhanced to maximum, it is referred to as "company oriented flexibility".

Thomson (cited in Waseem, 2017) has also conceptualized improved work life balance (WLB) as a positive outcome of remote working. To ensure this, organisations need to set very clear objectives related to remote working and those objectives must be aligned with corporate strategic goals, the implementation must be done in accordance with the available resources and more importantly the said changes need to be communicated effectively. In other words it can be said that the decisions related to remote working need to taken at strategic level.

Heider attribution theory (1958)

Attribution theory is concern with how individuals interpret events and how this relates to their thinking and behaviour. Attribution theory assumes that people try to determine why people do what they do, were by attributing causes to behaviour. This theory is relevant to this study in the sense that when employees are not comfortable with the flexibility time schedule they began to exhibit different behaviour, feelings, change of moods towards their job, actions which will in turn affect the productivity of the organization and the employees will not be satisfied while carrying out their duties. It is the responsibility of the organization to identify these changes and act immediately by putting the right flexibility timing that will enable the employees to work effective and efficiently, by so doing increasing employee performance, employee retention and employee commitment to the organization.(Ukessey 2018).

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The research design used for this study is the descriptive research design which is based on a theoretical basis where data will be collected, analyzed, prepared, and presented understandably.

Population for the study

The study population includes managers, CEOs, and heads of departments of thirty telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt. However, a sample was selected based on the size of the company. The study will use a total number of 117 respondents in the telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt with a maximum of six branches. See Appendix for the telecommunication tables and respondent table.

Sample size and sampling techniques

Sampling technique is a procedure used to select some elements of a population in such a way that it represents actual characteristics of the total population (Cohen, Marion & Morsion, 2000). The Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination was used to determine the sample size for this study. Therefore, the total number sample size was 86 using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table.

Instrument for data collection

To gather data for this study, questionnaires constructed by the researcher were distributed and retrieved; and other research work were obtained to gain secondary data.

Methods of data analysis

The spearman rank order correlation coefficient at a 0.05 level of significance based was adopted. The null hypothesis will be rejected whereas the alternative hypothesis will be accepted. The coefficient was computed with the formula:

$$R = \frac{6 \sum d^2}{N(n^2-1)}$$

Where;

N = number of pairs of data

D = different between ranking in each set of data

Σ = summation

Bivariate Analysis of the Variables

Remote Working and Organisational Effectiveness

Ho₁: there is no significant relationship between remote working and organisational goal accomplishment of telecommunication companies in Rivers state.

Ho₂: there is no significant relationship between remote working and organisational resource acquisition of telecommunication companies in Rivers state.

Ho₃: there is no significant relationship between remote working and organisational internal processes of telecommunication companies in Rivers state.

Correlations between Remote Working and Organisational Effectiveness

		Remote working	Goal accomplishment	Resource acquisition	Internal process	
Spearman's rho	Remote working	Correlation	1.000	.837**	.678**	.719**
		Coefficient				
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	80	80	80	80
	Goal accomplishment	Correlation	.837**	1.000	.710**	.535**
		Coefficient				
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	80	80	80	80
	Resource acquisition	Correlation	.678**	.710**	1.000	.641**
		Coefficient				
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	80	80	80	80
Internal process	Correlation	.719**	.535**	.641**	1.000	
	Coefficient					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	80	80	80	80	

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

Source: SPSS Output

Column two of table above shows r value of 0.837 at a significant level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating to remote working on goal accomplishment. Since the significant level is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho₁) which states that there is no significant influence of remote working on goal accomplishment of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt was rejected and the alternate hypothesis (H_{a1}) was accepted. This implies that there is a very high significant influence of of remote working on goal accomplishment of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt

Column three of table above shows r value of 0.678 at a significant level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating to remote working on resource acquisition. Since the significant level is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho₂) which states that there is no significant influence of remote working on resource acquisition of telecommunications companies in Port Harcourt was rejected and the alternate hypothesis (H_{a2}) was accepted. This implies that there a high significant influence of remote working on resource acquisition of telecommunications companies in Port Harcourt.

Column four of table above shows r value of 0.719 at a significant level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating to remote working on internal process. Since the significant level is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) which states that there is no significant influence of remote working on internal process of telecommunications companies in Port Harcourt was rejected and the alternate hypothesis (H_{a3}) was accepted. This implies that there is a high significant influence of remote working on internal process of telecommunications companies in Port Harcourt.

Thus, the results above showed that remote working has a significant positive influence on organisational effectiveness of telecommunication Company in Port Harcourt in terms of goal accomplishment, resource acquisition and internal process.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study were discussed under the following headings:

Remote working and Organisational Effectiveness

H_{01} : there is no significant relationship between remote working and organisational goal accomplishment of telecommunication companies in Rivers state.

H_{02} : there is no significant relationship between remote working and organisational resource acquisition of telecommunication companies in Rivers state.

H_{03} : there is no significant relationship between remote working and organisational internal processes of telecommunication companies in Rivers state.

The test of hypotheses one, two and three revealed that there is a significant positive relationship of remote working on organisational effectiveness in terms of goal accomplishment, resource acquisition and internal process of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers state. The findings revealed that workplace flexibility has a significant relationship with organisational efficiency. The analysis on the relationship between remote working and organisational efficiency (goal efficiency, resource acquisition and internal processes). The study revealed that working from home is profitable as it is a good strategy. It can avoid absenteeism and also has the capacity to boost the internal strength of the organisation. The finding is also supported by abid and barech (2017). They found a positive linkage between remote working and quality of life for employees. In their study they also found out that a proper use of remote working practice can be a source of organisational efficiency. They stated that in the long run, remote working will be beneficial for both organizations as well for employees. Moreover, among varied benefits of remote working some of the prominent benefits that could emerge include: increase in labour capacity, increase in productivity, decrease in recruitment costs etc. Remote working lead to increase in number of working hours. Thomson (cited in waseem, 2017) also stated that remote working lead to improve work life balance.

CONCLUSION

The study has examined remote working and organizational efficiency. The study emerges with the conclusion that remote working has a very strong positive relationship with organizational efficiency. The adoption of workplace flexibility will drastically reduce burden on employees and also aid organizations in the attainment of their goal accomplishment, resource acquisition and maintain a good internal processes.

Similarly, based on the specific objective, the following conclusions have been made:

- I. There is significant relationship between remote working and goal achievement in telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.
- II. There is significant relationship between remote working and resource acquisition in telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.
- III.** There is significant relationship between remote working and internal processes in telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations have been made:

- I. Flexibility is directly related to perception of job insecurity and a breach of employees' psychological contract; as a result, flexibility is portrayed as an unconstructive theory. However it should not be used as a global conclusion.
- II. Workplace Flexibility should be created and put into place in a way that both the company and the employees may get the most from them.
- III. Organisation whose workforce are over burden often experience absenteeism, therefore, organisations should adopt a flexible workplace to enable goal achievement.
Organization should engage in the act of job rotation in other to discover the skills and talents of their workforce.

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