

WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY AND ORGANISATIONAL EFFICIENCY IN BAYELSA STATE TELECOMMUNICATION SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

This research examines workplace flexibility and organisational efficiency in the telecommunication sector of Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The aim was to determine the relationship between two facets of workplace flexibility, task adaptability and remote work and goal achievement as a measure of organisational efficiency. The research employed a descriptive and cross-sectional survey approach, targeting senior executives, department heads, and supervisory managers from three telecommunications companies registered with the relevant regulatory bodies. The Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table determined a sample size of 44 respondents, utilising proportionate stratified random sampling. The questionnaire items used for the research was derived from Kottwitz et al. (2020) for workplace flexibility and Nwanzu & Uhiara (2018) for goal attainment to gather data. The reliability of the research was measured using the Cronbach's Alpha with coefficients that resulted to 0.78 and 0.96, respectively. Employing Spearman's rho in SPSS for correlation analysis revealed a robust, statistically significant association between task adaptability and goal achievement, as well as between remote working and goal achievement. The findings indicate that flexible work arrangements enhance employee performance, service delivery, and competitiveness, despite challenges related to infrastructure and operations. The study concludes that workplace flexibility significantly influences the operational efficacy of the telecommunication sector in Bayelsa State. It proposes that telecommunications corporations permit employees to work remotely or establish their own schedules without compromising service delivery or collaboration. It states that employees must have access to dependable internet, functional gadgets, user-friendly software, and effective supervisory methods to maintain high productivity.

Keywords: workplace flexibility, task adaptability, remote working, organisational efficiency, goal achievement

Introduction

In the past twenty years, the global telecommunications industry has gone from being a luxury service to a crucial aspect of social interaction and economic progress. Adeleke and Adepoju (2020) believe that mobile networks, internet access, and digital platforms are becoming more and more important in daily life, such as shopping, learning, banking, and government. In many developing countries, including Nigeria, telecommunications are an important part of national growth. They link cities and towns, promote business, and make it easy for people to obtain information (Adewale & Oguntunde, 2019).

Bayelsa State, which is in the Niger Delta region, is a positive example of this big change. The state is recognised for its oil exploration activities, but now it is seeing a jump in digital connectivity as telecoms providers increase their offerings to meet the increased need for internet and communication access (Okoro, 2021). Smartphones are becoming more popular, young people are full of energy, and there is a growing need for real-time communication in both personal and business contexts. All of these things have made the need for beneficial telecom services even stronger (Odigbo et al., 2020).

However, the sector's growth is not without its challenges. Infrastructure problems, high operating costs in riverine areas, and fierce rivalry among service providers can sometimes affect network reliability (Eze & Chinedu, 2018). In this competitive environment with limited resources, organisational efficiency which is the capacity to deliver high-quality services promptly, reliably, and cost-effectively has emerged as a strategic necessity (Drucker, 1993; Olowookere & Adepoju, 2021). Efficiency isn't just about getting new technology; it's also about having a dynamic workforce who are motivated, adaptable, and quick on their feet so that they can address changing needs rapidly. This is when it's incredibly crucial to be able to change things at work. Employees may be happier, less likely to burn out, and better at solving problems when they have flexible work arrangements, such as working from home, altering their schedules, and changing their task assignments. All of these elements can help the business run better and supply better service (Kossek & Thompson, 2016; Allen et al., 2021).

The telecommunications industry in Bayelsa State has grown considerably because more people want to be connected, more people have smartphones, and more digital services are being used in everyday life (Adeleke & Adepoju, 2020; Odigbo et al., 2020). Despite this, many operators still struggle to achieve and sustain organisational efficiency, which is the ability to provide high-quality services rapidly and at low cost. Ongoing problems, such as unreliable networks, poor infrastructure in riverine areas, high operational expenses, and a highly competitive market, keep performance low (Eze & Chinedu, 2018; Okoro, 2021).

In Bayelsa State, the application of workplace flexibility remains limited. Many telecommunications firms still have rigid work arrangements that can stifle creativity, make it harder to make decisions, and lower employee engagement (Olowookere & Adepoju, 2021). Concerns about performance monitoring, a perceived loss of management authority, and inadequate technology infrastructure hinder companies' readiness to embrace flexible work methods (Adewale & Oguntunde, 2019).

While research in other domains corroborates the advantageous correlation between workplace flexibility and organisational effectiveness, there exists a deficiency of empirical evidence in Bayelsa State's telecommunications sector to guide strategic implementation.

There is a link between workplace flexibility and higher efficiency in other parts of the world, but we're not very knowledgeable about how this relationship works in Bayelsa State's telecommunications sector. This is especially true because the region has its own unique social and economic conditions and infrastructure problems. To understand how telecom companies in the area can stay competitive and sustainable as operational problems grow, it is important to fill this gap.

Conceptual framework

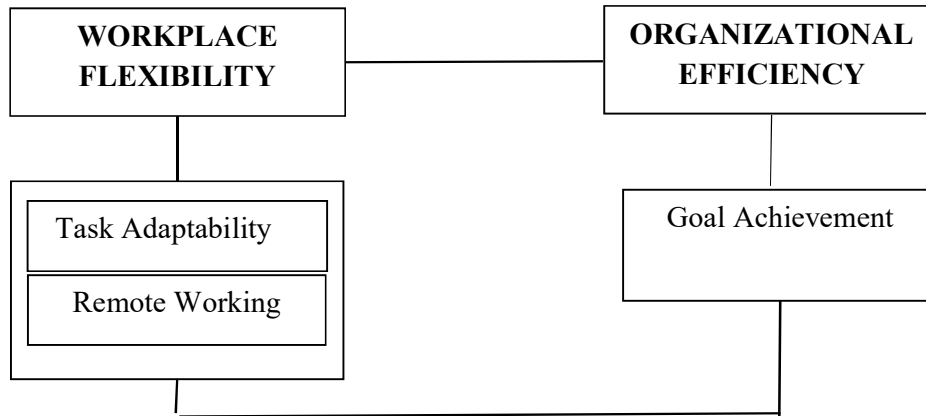


Fig. 1.1: Conceptual framework on workplace flexibility and organizational efficiency

SOURCE: Chung and Tijdens (2012), Erik (2017).

Objectives of the study

This study seeks to investigate the effect of workplace flexibility and organizational efficiency in Bayelsa State Telecommunication Sector. The specific objectives of the study are,

1. To determine the relationship between remote working and goal achievement.
2. To examine the relationship between job rotation and goal achievement.

Research questions

The research questions of this work include the following:

1. What is the relationship between remote working and goal achievement.?
2. What is the relationship between job rotation and goal achievement?

Research hypothesis

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

- Ho₁: There is no relationship between remote working and goal achievement.
Ho₂: job rotation does not relate with goal achievement.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Workplace Flexibility

Workplace flexibility has become an important part of modern organizational design because it shows how important it is to make work structures fit the changing needs of individuals, businesses, and markets. It refers to the ability of employees to affect when, where, and how work is done while still allowing organizations to keep or improve performance results (Kossek & Thompson, 2016). This idea has become more important as globalization, new technologies, and changes in the makeup of the workforce change the way work is done (Allen et al., 2021).

The growth of this sector is closely linked to global trends like technological innovation, which makes it possible to work from anywhere, collaborate in the cloud, and talk to people virtually; globalization, which requires work across time zones; and demographic changes, like the growing number of

millennials and Gen Z workers who value work-life balance (Allen et al., 2021; Chung & van der Horst, 2020). These changes have made it so that strict, traditional work arrangements may make employees less happy and make it harder for organizations to adjust.

During uncertain times, such as when the economy is unstable, pandemics occur, and technology evolves rapidly, workplace flexibility becomes more than just a human resource trend; it transforms into a strategic necessity. It helps firms stay flexible, allowing them to quickly change direction when things go wrong while keeping their employees committed and productive. In the end, the best flexibility strategies are the ones that attain a balance between the aims of the company and the freedom of the employees, making the workplace better for everyone.

For this research, task adaptability and remote working are the dimensions examined in the study.

Task Adaptability

Task adaptability is how well an employee can modify their thoughts, actions, and feelings to meet the needs of their job. People often think of adaptive performance as being able to cope with uncertainty, face new challenges, learn new things, and handle stress (Carpini et al., 2017). Task adaptability is demonstrated in practice when workers are able to switch between activities, take on additional duties, or change how they approach problem-solving without experiencing a drop in output or quality. For example, in the telecoms industry in Bayelsa State, employees may need to swiftly learn and use new customer service tools, switch to handling virtual support channels, or adjust to new operating rules because of changes in the law. This kind of adaptability makes sure that the business keeps providing services, keeps customers happy, and stays ahead of the competition.

Task flexibility plays a crucial role in an organization's overall performance. Employees that adapt rapidly cut down on the time it takes to make changes, make fewer mistakes while making them, and keep the workflow stable. All of these things are particularly important in industries where speed of service delivery is a competitive advantage (Griffin & Hesketh, 2003). Furthermore, individuals that can adapt are usually better at working with people from different departments, are more resilient under pressure, and are more proactive in finding solutions to problems, which all improve operational performance.

Remote Working

Remote working which is also known as telework or telecommuting, is a flexible work arrangement in which employees execute their jobs from places apart from the office, often using digital technology and communication tools (Wang et al., 2021). This type of job is becoming more and more common because of developments in technology, changing expectations of workers, and most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic, which sped up its use all over the world (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020). Remote work not only helps people balance their professional and personal lives, but it also helps businesses save money and locate better employees.

It used to be a special benefit for some occupations, but now many organisations use it as a tool to get work done. It works best when there is good communication, a solid digital infrastructure, and a culture that supports it (Allen et al., 2015). Researchers have noted that, when executed effectively, remote work can enhance employee satisfaction, increase productivity, and improve retention rates (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Vayre & Vonthron, 2019). However, problems like feeling lonely, having trouble separating work and home life, and possibly communication problems can make these benefits less helpful (Oakman et al., 2020). It can be harder to use these benefits if you have trouble separating work from home life or if you have trouble communicating (Oakman et al., 2020).

Overall, remote work has evolved from a contingency plan to a strategic workforce policy. Its success is contingent upon the ability to effectively leverage technology, balance flexibility with organisational cohesion, and resolve both the opportunities and challenges it presents in the contemporary workplace.

Organizational Efficiency

Organisational efficiency is about how well an organisation turns inputs (such as labour, capital, and time) into outputs that are wanted while wasting as little as possible and keeping quality high. The notion has transitioned from a limited focus on cost reduction and throughput measures to a multidimensional perspective that integrates operational performance, quality, customer outcomes, and the development of strategic capabilities (Bititci, 2015). Recent studies stress that efficiency should be interpreted in the context of dynamic capability, innovation capacity, and the organisation's power to reorganise resources amidst uncertainty (Teece et al., 2016).

There is a persistent body of literature that concentrates on measurement. Ratio measures like productivity and cost per unit are still important, but researchers are pushing for mixed measurement systems that combine financial indicators with process, customer, and learning-and-growth metrics. The Balanced Scorecard and Integrated Performance Measurement Systems are two examples of these systems (Niven, 2016). These systems assist managers in converting strategy into operational measurements and ensuring coherence between short-term efficiency and long-term capabilities development (Bititci et al., 2015).

The correlation between efficient organisational design and HR practices is becoming more and more apparent. De Menezes and Kelliher (2017) and Bloom et al. (2015) found that employees' skills, job design (multiskilling), and flexible work systems improve resource utilisation and process resilience, particularly in turbulent situations. According to the dynamic capabilities view, businesses can sidestep the efficiency vs. innovation dilemma by integrating learning routines with efficient processes.

Goal Achievement

Goal attainment is a measure of how well an individual, group, or organisation can reach its goals in the time given. Many different types of businesses view it as a crucial indicator of productivity and efficiency (Locke & Latham, 2019). This concept emanates from the Goal-setting theory which says that people do better when they have clear, measurable, and hard goals to aim for (Latham & Seijts, 2016). Abdulwahab and Al-Dhaafri (2019) say that modern businesses link meeting goals to performance management systems, programs to get employees involved, and strategic planning. Research indicates that properly defined goals facilitate the alignment of individual and team actions with broader strategic objectives, enhancing accountability and collaboration (Aguinis et al., 2021). For example, high-performing businesses use balanced scorecards and key performance indicators (KPIs) to keep track of and assess progress (Kaplan & Norton, 2015; Al-Madi & Assal, 2021).

Theoretical Underpinning Contingency Theory

Contingency Theory a theory by Fiedler (1964) asserts that there isn't a single best approach to management. Rather, a manager's effectiveness depends on how well the organization's processes, structures, and external circumstances mesh. Regarding workplace flexibility, contingency theory asserts that flexible work arrangements only improve productivity when they align with organisational goals, culture, and the external business environment (Donaldson, 2021). For instance, by promoting quicker decision-making and employee response, flexible scheduling and remote work may increase efficiency in situations with a high degree of uncertainty (Borkowska &

Chrobot, 2020). Rigid structures, on the other hand, might occasionally perform better in highly regulated or interdependent work contexts.

The assumption is that flexible work arrangements function best when they match the organization's strategy, environment, and personnel, especially in terms of workplace flexibility and efficiency. Flexible scheduling, telecommuting, and job rotation can boost productivity if they align with organisational goals, industry norms, and employee skills (Saini & Agarwal, 2020).

A recent study suggests that workplace flexibility works best when an organisation's structure, leadership, and processes can adapt (Nguyen et al., 2022). Flexible work arrangements can speed up decision-making, make employees happier, and boost productivity in fast-paced workplaces. Flexibility in structured, rule-bound fields may require tougher control mechanisms to work smoothly (Goyal & Agrawal, 2018). The "fit" principle of contingency theory states that management must tailor flexibility initiatives to their operational needs.

Empirical Review

Wolf and Beblo (2004) analyse the research titled, Does Work Time Flexibility Work? A Practical Evaluation of the Efficiency Impacts on German Companies. The study aimed to analyse the influence of flexible work hours on organisational effectiveness by utilising representative establishment data from Germany. They simultaneously evaluated a stochastic production frontier and the factors that affect technical efficiency. The results demonstrated that work-time schedules with moderate flexibility are positively associated with technical efficiency. However, the findings also revealed a negative correlation between extremely flexible work time arrangements and an effective workflow organisation. However, we should not interpret these efficiency losses as causal impacts, given that underperforming organisations typically employ extremely flexible work time plans.

Okul (2015) examined the influence of workplace flexibility on employee performance and organisational efficiency in Kenyan commercial banks by utilising a descriptive survey study design. Data were gathered from 120 employees at several banks, and the results indicated that flexible working hours, telecommuting, and job-sharing favourably impacted employee motivation, therefore improving organisational efficiency. The study suggested that companies should make flexible work arrangements a part of their culture to get better results.

Lyness, Gornick, Stone, and Grotto (2016) investigated the correlation between flexibility practices and company performance in multinational corporations, utilising a quantitative cross-sectional dataset from more than 200 firms in the United States and Europe. The results indicated that flexibility, especially regarding schedule and location, correlated with reduced turnover rates and enhanced operational efficiency. They determined that workplace flexibility may serve as a strategic instrument for enhancing competitive advantage when synchronised with organisational objectives.

Chung and van der Lippe (2018) performed an extensive quantitative analysis involving 30 European nations to evaluate the impact of workplace flexibility on organisational efficiency. They used data from the European Working Conditions Survey to show that being able to choose where and when to work made people more productive. However, the benefit was bigger when workers had more control over their job. The authors stressed that flexibility without autonomy did not result in substantial efficiency improvements.

Onyeizugbe, Nduka, and Enaihi (2019) investigated the practical use of self-rostering in Nigerian organisations using a contingent methodology. The study, employing both primary and secondary data within a qualitative framework, revealed that while some flexibility factors noted in the literature were deemed insignificant by practitioners, others—specifically shift-swapping, trust, and

communication protocols—were recognised as essential determinants of efficiency. They suggested modifying the flexibility models to fit the needs of each organisation instead of using the same ones for everyone.

Chung and Van der Horst (2020) examined the effects of remote work on organisational performance in the UK prior to the pandemic, utilising longitudinal data from the UK Household Longitudinal Study. The findings revealed that moderate remote work usage correlated with enhanced efficiency and diminished absenteeism; however, excessive distant work devoid of adequate managerial support hindered coordination and delayed decision-making.

Adisa, Gbadamosi, and Osabutey (2021) examined the relationship between flexible working arrangements and productivity in Nigerian professional service organisations using a mixed-methods approach. The findings demonstrated that flexible schedules boosted productivity, but only when managers exhibited trust in them and had effective methods to monitor their work. The research suggested a mixed method that combines accountability measures with flexibility.

Carnevale and Hatak (2022) examined workplace flexibility during the COVID-19 pandemic across small and medium-sized organisations (SMEs) in Europe, utilising survey data from 1,200 firms. They discovered that adaptability in work location and schedule enhanced operational continuity during crises, with digitally enabled companies indicating markedly greater efficiency levels.

Wang and Huang (2024) looked at how workplace flexibility could help Chinese IT companies be more productive after the pandemic. Using a longitudinal dataset from 2019 to 2023, they found that hybrid work models that combined remote and on-site work led to the best efficiency outcomes. This was mostly because employees were happier and didn't have to spend as much time commuting. They suggested that businesses make flexibility a permanent part of their long-term plans instead of only using it as a short-term remedy.

METHODOLOGY

The study assesses the relationship between of workplace flexibility and organisational efficiency of Bayelsa State Telecommunication Sector. The work utilised a descriptive and cross-sectional survey research design, concentrating on essential facts, views, opinions, demographics, information, attitudes, motives, and behaviours of respondents in relation to their replies to the research instrument (Valerie et al. 2019). For this research, the population includes top managers, and heads of departments and other supervisory managers of three functional telecommunication companies operating at Bayelsa State. These firms have been proven functional, registered with the CAC and other regulatory bodies due. The study list a total number of 57 respondents in the telecommunication companies. For this study, the total sample size of 44 was obtained using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determinant, and the proportionate stratified random sampling with the aid of the bowley technique was used to determine the sample for each of the firms. Hypotheses were tested through correlation analysis, and data processing was conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The selection of the tool was based on its ability to demonstrate the degree of association between the two variables. In this study, the measuring instruments for the variables were obtained from literature and scales developed by scholars. The measurement scale for workplace flexibility and its dimensions; task adaptability and remote working was drawn from Kottwitz at al (2020) with a cronbach alpha results of 0.78. Organizational efficiency and the measure; goal achievement survey scale was drawn from Nwanzu & Uhiara 2018 40 item scale with cronbach results of 0.96. The validity of the instrument was confirmed via expert review in management research, ensuring that the items were closely aligned with the research questions.

The reliability of the instrument was assessed through the Cronbach Alpha statistic, with the pilot survey achieving a threshold score of 0.70 or above.

Data Analysis

The questionnaire was given to 44 respondents in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. 44 questionnaire items were returned, which means that 100% of the people who filled them out did so. The response rate shows how the respondents were optimistic to take part in the study.

Decision rule: The decision rule which applies for all bivariate test outcomes is according to Bryman and Bell (2003), where:

Table 1: Shows the description of range of correlation (Rho) values, as well as the correlative level of association

Range of Rho (+ and – sign value)	Association strength
± 0.80 – 0.99	Very High Extent
± 0.60 – 0.79	High Extent
± 0.40 – 0.59	Average Extent
± 0.20 – 0.39	Low Extent
± 0.00 – 0.19	Very Low Extent

Source: Bryman and Bell (2003)

Table 1 shows that the '+' sign of Rho points a direct and positive relationship, while '-' sign of Rho shows an indirect or inverse relationship. Thus, the Rho sign indicates the direction of relationship between the predictor and criterion variables. This section was therefore used to present the answers to our research questions and test the earlier postulated hypotheses.

Hypothesis One

Ho₁: There is no relationship between Task Adaptability and Goal Achievement

Table 2: Correlations Between Task Adaptability and Goal Achievement

			Task Adaptability	Goal Achievement
Spearman's rho	Task Adaptability	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.910**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	44	44
	Goal Achievement	Correlation Coefficient	.910**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	44	44

From the result in the table above, the correlation coefficient (rho) shows that there is relationship between task adaptability and goal achievement. The *correlation coefficient 0.910* confirms the magnitude and strength of this relationship and it is very strong correlation between the variables. The correlation represents is significant at $p\ 0.000 < 0.05$. Therefore, based on the study findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate accepted. Thus, there is a statistically significant relationship between task adaptability and goal achievement.

Hypothesis Two

Ho₂: There is no relationship between Remote Working And Goal Achievement

Table 3: Correlations Between Remote Working And Goal Achievement

			Remote Working	Goal Achievement
Spearman's rho	Remote Working	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.951**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	44	44
	Goal Accomplishment	Correlation Coefficient	.951**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	44	44

Source: SPSS Output version 25.0

From the result in the table above, the correlation coefficient (rho) shows that there is relationship between remote working and goal achievement. The *correlation coefficient 0.951* confirms the magnitude and strength of this relationship and it is very strong correlation between the variables. The correlation represents is significant at $p\ 0.000 < 0.05$. Therefore, based on the study findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate accepted. Thus, there is a statistically significant relationship between goal remote working and goal achievement.

DISCUSSION

The study demonstrated a strong positive link between workplace flexibility specifically task adaptability, remote working and organisational efficiency, measured by goal achievement in Bayelsa State's telecommunication sector. This means that making jobs and work locations more flexible greatly increases the chances of reaching organisational goals. These findings are consistent with prior research conducted by Okul (2015), Lyness et al. (2016), Chung and van der Lippe (2018), and Adisa et al. (2021), which indicated that flexibility correlates with enhanced productivity, increased motivation, and reduced absenteeism. The results support Onyeizugbe et al. (2019), emphasising the need for flexibility measures customised to the organisational context. In this profession, being adaptable means being able to quickly meet the needs of the business. Remote work, on the other hand, employs technology to help you do activities faster and make better use of your time, which helps you stay competitive and reach your goals.

CONCLUSION

The research demonstrates that workplace flexibility, particularly the ability to modify activities and telecommute, significantly enhances organisational efficiency in the telecoms sector of Bayelsa State, as evidenced by the achievement of objectives. In an environment characterised by infrastructural challenges, high operational costs, and intense competition, adaptability enables organisations to improve staff efficiency, enhance service delivery, and maintain competitiveness. This is consistent with studies from throughout the world indicating flexible work arrangements increase employee motivation, reduce operational bottlenecks, and help businesses address changing market needs. Fixing the local issues that make it hard to be flexible could make the industry far more sustainable and productive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendation was stated based on the findings of the study;

1. Telecommunication firms should permit staff to work remotely or modify their schedules as necessary, provided it does not disrupt collaboration or service provision. This method enhances focus, alleviates stress, and aids employees in balancing their personal and professional responsibilities. These elements enable enhanced performance.
2. Telecommunication firms should ensure that their staff members have access to dependable internet, functional devices, and user-friendly software so they can perform their duties effectively wherever they are. Additionally, supervisors must be able to monitor employees' work, communicate effectively, and resolve issues in a flexible work environment. This ensures that even when employees aren't physically there, work proceeds smoothly and objectives are reached.

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