Exploring Flexible Work Practices and their Impact on Employee Performance in Fast Food Restaurants in South West Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the role of flexible working arrangements and their impact on employee performance within fast food restaurants in South West Nigeria. In today's fast-paced and competitive business environment, organizations are increasingly adopting adaptable work models to improve employee satisfaction and productivity. Despite this, many fast food establishments in Nigeria still operate under rigid schedules, limiting staff autonomy and hindering work-life balance. The research explores the types of flexible work practices employed, evaluates their influence on job performance and satisfaction, and identifies challenges restricting their effectiveness. A descriptive survey design was employed, targeting a population of 340 employees across selected fast food restaurants, with 183 respondents sampled. Data were collected using structured questionnaire and analyzed through frequency counts and percentage distributions. The study focused on practices such as shift-based scheduling, shift swapping, leave flexibility, and work-life balance policies. Findings revealed that flexible work arrangements were only partially implemented, with shift-based schedules and shift swapping being most common. Employees reported improvements in motivation, productivity, and work-life balance; however, challenges such as inadequate digital tools, absence of formal flexible work policies, and difficulty in monitoring performance were noted. The study concludes that flexible work practices positively influence employee performance but remain underutilized in the sector. It recommends expanding flexible work options, enhancing technological support, and implementing clear policies to maximize the benefits of workplace flexibility.

Keywords: *Flexible work arrangements; Employee performance; Fast food industry; Work-life balance; Nigeria*

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1. Introduction

In recent times, there has been rapid changes in the world of work, especially how work is carried out, as a result of globalization and advancement in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) which is characterised by a new trend of working arrangements. Hence, there is Flexibility regarding where and when work is completed and these options are becoming increasingly available to employees, especially following the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent shift in the nature of work (Shifrin & Michel, 2022). As a result of technological advancements, shifting workforce demographics, and evolving societal expectations, flexible work arrangements (FWAs) have emerged as a cornerstone of modern organizational strategy. Subsequently, the traditional workplace paradigm, which is characterized by fixed work schedules and centralized office environments, has undergone a profound transformation in recent years.

FWAs is characterized by different work arrangements which includes remote work, flextime, compressed workweeks, shift work and job sharing, which are all designed to offer employees greater control over when, where, and how they do their work. This shift in working arrangement does not only reflect changing employee working preferences but also responds to organizations' quest to enhance productivity and remain competitive in a dynamic global market (Pragathi & Reddy, 2023). According to Krishnasamy (2023), flexibility in Human Resource Planning (HRP) refers to an organization's ability to adapt and respond to changes in its workforce needs, business environment, and strategic goals. It involves having the capacity to adjust staffing levels, skills, and structures as necessary to meet evolving demands. Furthermore, Orishede & Ndudi (2020) opined that flexible work arrangements are those work arrangements that permits employees to not only change their work schedule, but also the number of hours they work, where they do their work, and the opportunity to take leave from work, either on a permanent or temporary basis, to meet responsibilities outside of work environment.

Flexible work arrangements have become increasingly popular in recent years, and for good reason, they offer numerous benefits for both employers and employees. FWAs have been shown repeatedly to yield both positive individual and organizational results for a full spectrum of indicators which includes: improved productivity, improved quality of work, enhanced job satisfaction, increased organizational commitment, favourable applicant perceptions, higher financial performance and reduced labour turnover. Flexible work options, including shift work and flexitime schedules, have been found to improve job satisfaction, work-

life balance and productivity (Allen et al., 2015). The idea of the shift work and flexitime schedules gives employees the opportunity for growth and development which helps them broaden their knowledge, skills and abilities, and apply the competencies they have gained to new situations (Elenwo, 2023). The opportunity to gain new skills and experiences can increase workers motivation, job satisfaction and help employees more effectively manage their job stress. This results into two pluses for the organization by enhancing organizational effectiveness and improving work quality, as well as helping the organization attract and retain top-quality employees (Elenwo, 2023).

Fast food restaurants, also known as Quick service restaurants in South West Nigeria have become an important part of urban food systems, especially in densely populated and economically active cities like Lagos, Ibadan, Oshogbo and Abeokuta. These restaurants provide fast, affordable, and accessible meals, which make them very important, especially in large cities where people battle time constraints and demanding work schedules. The growth of fast food restaurants in Nigeria is closely linked to urbanisation, changing lifestyles, and the rising demand for convenience in food consumption, especially among working-class people and students (Mustapha et al., 2021). As a result, they have become a key part of people's daily life, because eating or placing order for these meals save time and reduce the burden of home cooking for people with busy routines (Deloitte, 2020; Mustapha et al., 2021).

Not only do they make life easier by taking the pressure of cooking off people, fast food restaurants also contribute significantly to creation of jobs, income generation, and overall economic development in South West Nigeria. Studies have also shown that the food and beverage sector not only provides substantial direct and indirect employment opportunities but also supports supply chains in agriculture, logistics, and retail, which subsequently strengthens local economies (Igbinovia & Popoola, 2022). Furthermore, both formal and informal sectors workers increasingly rely on these restaurants for quick meals during limited break times, which in return help sustain productivity in workplaces with rigid or extended working hours. On a national scale, fast food restaurants also contribute to Nigeria's broader economy through taxation, entrepreneurship development, and increased consumer spending, thereby making it an essential part of the country's service sector growth (Okeke & Chukwuemeka, 2021). Hence, fast food restaurants in South West Nigeria don't just play a functional role in supporting employee well-being, it also serves a structural role in driving economic activity at regional and national levels.

The fast pace of economic development in the 20th century across the globe has created new endeavors for organizations (Brown, 2021). Globalization has changed the world into a global village where this change has pushed the organizations like eateries strive hard to gain and sustain their competitive advantage. However, it has been seen that most fast food restaurants have not embraced the trend of flexible work hours and as a result of this, performance in that sector has been relatively low. Flexible working arrangements like the shift work and flexitime in eateries and restaurants are mostly static. The work arrangement is routinely scheduled while most employees work according to the shifts designated to them not as they want to. This study therefore seeks to explore and examine the extent to which Flexible Work Arrangement (FWAs) have been embraced in the Nigerian work environment to fill in the yearning gap of ascertaining how flexible work arrangements impact organizational performance in the Food and Beverage Industry, particularly in the fast food restaurants in South West Nigeria.

1.1 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows;

i. To investigate the type(s) of flexible working arrangements mostly adopted by management of fast food restaurants in South west Nigeria.
ii. To evaluate the impact of flexible work arrangements on employee performance.
iii. To identify the challenges restricting the effectiveness of the working arrangements adopted

2. Theoretical Review

2.1 Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET) as developed by Peter Blau (1964) posits that the relationship between employers and employees is based on mutual exchange between the two as well as reciprocity. The theory opines that people stay in relationships, jobs, or social interactions when they believe the rewards are greater than the sacrifices involved, and that they are benefiting from such interactions.In other words, when employees work under favourable conditions such as flexible work schedules, shift, supportive supervision, flextime and other flexible work options, they tend to reciprocate with positive attitudes and improved performance at work. Social Exchange Theory assumes that workers respond positively to

organizational support because they perceive the organization's support as a sign that their contribution to the organization is valued (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Hence, flexible work arrangements can help employees of fast food restaurants manage stress, reduce work-family conflict, and improve job satisfaction, thereby encouraging greater commitment and productivity.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Design

This study adopts a quantitative survey research design to examine Explore Flexible Work Practices and how they affect Employee Performance in Fast Food Restaurants in South West Nigeria. This approach was considered as appropriate because it gives room for objective measurement of variables and it also helps with empirical testing of hypotheses, thereby giving a comprehensive understanding of the impact of flexible working arrangements on performance within the food and beverages industry. Structured questionnaire was used to collect numerical data from employees of 10 selected fast food restaurants within the South West Nigeria, including Lagos, Ibadan, Oshogbo and Abeokuta, enabling statistical analysis of trends and relationships. The study was conducted within a target population of 340 employees across the selected fast food restaurants, with a total of 183 respondents sampled, using Taro Yamane (1967) sampling formula. The table below shows the population breakdown:

Table 1. Participants/Area

City	Number of Fast food Restaurants sampled	Population
Lagos	3	53
Ibadan	3	50
Oshogbo	2	40
Abeokuta	2	40
Total	10	183

Source: Field survey, 2025

2.2 Method of Data collection

Primary data are employed for this study. The primary data are sourced through the administration of self-designed questionnaire. The questionnaire items were designed by the researcher based on the theme of the study. The survey captured

socio-demographic information of respondents, the instrument contains four sections: Section one contains personal data of respondents such as age, sex, educational qualification and years of experience. Section two contains items on the type(s) of flexible working arrangements adopted by selected fast food restaurants while Section three contains items on the challenges of the working arrangements of the restaurants.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 2. Socio-Demographic distribution of Respondents 1

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)	N
Age	18-24 years	47	25.7	183
	25-31 years	82	44.8	
	32-40 years	39	21.3	
	41 years above	15	8.2	
Gender	Male	101	55.2	183
	Female	82	44.8	

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 2 above shows that 47 of the respondents representing 25.7% are between the age of 18–24 years, while majority of the respondents at 82, representing 44.8% are between 25–31 years, 39 of the respondents representing 21.3% are between 32–40 years, while 15 of the respondents representing 8.2% are 40 years and above. On the gender, 101 of the respondents representing 55.2% are male, while 82 of the respondents representing 44.8% are female. This implies that the majority of the respondents are male.

Table 2b. Socio-Demographic distribution 2

	Total	183	100	N
Marital Status	Single	113	61.7	183
	Married	64	35	
	Divorced	6	3.3	
Educational Qualification	SSCE	21	11.5	183
	OND/NCE	63	34.4	
	B.Sc/HND	81	44.3	
	M.Sc	18	9.8	

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 2b above shows the distribution of respondents' marital status. Thirteen (13) of the respondents representing 61.7% are single, 64 of the respondents representing 35.0% are married, while 6 of the respondents representing 3.3% are divorced. This implies that the majority of the respondents are single.

3.1 Flexible Working Arrangements

Table 3. Flexible Working Arrangements Available

S/N	Statement	Yes		No	
		Freq	%	Freq	%
1	My organization allows employees to choose their work hours.	68	37.2	115	62.8
2	Remote work is permitted in my organization.	12	6.6	171	93.4
3	Shift-based work schedules are implemented to provide flexibility.	154	84.2	29	15.8
4	Employees can adjust their work shifts when necessary.	103	56.3	80	43.7
5	My organization has policies that support work-life balance.	91	49.7	92	50.3
6	I have the freedom to work at different outlets of my organization.	76	41.5	107	58.5

7	My organization provides flexible leave options for employees.	67	36.6	116	63.4
8	Management supports and encourages flexible working arrangements.	88	48.1	95	51.9
9	The organization's opening and closing hours are flexible to accommodate employee needs.	59	32.2	124	67.8
10	Employees in my organization can swap shifts with prior approval.	112	61.2	71	38.8

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 3 above shows that majority of respondents (84.2%), affirmed that shift-based work schedules are implemented to provide flexibility, followed by 61.2% who agreed that employees can swap shifts with prior approval, whereas 71 respondents (38.8%) disagreed. A total of 103 respondents (56.3%) stated that they can adjust their work shifts when necessary, while 80 respondents (43.7%) indicated otherwise. The data further reveals that remote work is the least practiced arrangement, with only 12 respondents (6.6%) acknowledging its availability, and 171 respondents (93.4%) denying it. In terms of policy support, 91 respondents (49.7%) agreed that their organization has policies promoting work-life balance, while 92 (50.3%) disagreed. It reveals that although flexible working arrangement are practiced in the selected fast food restaurants, their implementation is uneven and mostly limited to shift-based work schedules and shift swapping. While shift flexibility is widely embraced, other forms such as remote work, adjustable work hours, and flexible leave options are not commonly provided. This indicates a partial adoption of flexibility within the operational model of the food and beverage industry. These findings align with the results of Abdulwasiu & Waheed, (2023) who observed that flexitime and shift-based practices were more common in customer-facing sectors like hospitality, improving job satisfaction and reducing absenteeism. Similarly, Adewumi (2019) noted that shift rotations promoted teamwork in food and beverage companies, though telecommuting was largely reserved for administrative roles, reflecting the same pattern seen in this study.

3.2 Impacts of the type of flexible working arrangements adopted on Productivity

Table 4. Correlation Analysis on Flexible Working Arrangements and Employee Performance

	Flexible Working Arrangements	Employee Performance
Flexible Working Arrangements	Pearson Correlation	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	
N	183	
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	.482
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N	183	

Source: Field work 2025

The analysis shows a significant positive relationship between flexible working arrangements and employee performance. A correlation of 0.482 indicates that flexible practices like shift scheduling and remote work enhance productivity and motivation. This supports the hypothesis that flexible work arrangements positively influence employee performance in the food and beverage sector. This suggests that when employees are allowed a level of autonomy over their work schedules, they tend to exhibit more commitment, reduced stress levels, and increased output. These outcomes are consistent with the study by Bagaskara et al. (2021), which found that flexible work arrangements significantly boosted employee productivity in Telkom, Indonesia.

3.3 Challenges

Table 5. Challenges of Implementation

Variable	n(%)
Resource and technological constraints affect productivity (tools + ICT support)	82(45%)
Policy clarity and work-life boundary challenges (unclear policies + work–life balance issues)	27(15%)
Performance monitoring challenges under flexible work	23(12%)
Need for improved management systems and fairness in flexible work arrangements	51(28%)

Source: Field work 2025

Table 5 above revealed that majority at 45% agreed that Resource and technological constraints (tools + ICT support) is their biggest challenge, followed by Need for improved management systems and fairness in flexible work arrangements at 28%. Also, 15% said theirs was Policy clarity and work-life boundary challenges (unclear policies + work–life balance issues) while 12% said theirs was Performance

monitoring challenges under flexible work. These concerns align with the study by Salahu et.al (2025), which emphasized that communication gaps, lack of digital infrastructure, and performance tracking limitations hinder the effectiveness of flexible work in Nigeria's retail sector. The current findings also echo those of Abdulwasiu & Waheed, 2023, who reported scheduling conflicts, employee burnout, and unfair workload distribution as significant challenges in fast-food chains.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the study establishes that while flexible working arrangements exist within the food and beverage industry, their implementation remains limited, with shift-based schedules being the most commonly adopted. These arrangements have shown to positively influence employee productivity, motivation, job satisfaction, and work-life balance. However, the benefits are hindered by several challenges, including lack of clear policies, inadequate technological support, limited remote work options, and difficulties in monitoring employee performance. The study recommends that organizations within the food and beverage industry broaden the scope of their flexible working arrangements. Organizations should also ensure that these arrangements are adaptable to different roles within the company to encourage inclusion and equity. Furthermore, it is essential for management to establish clear and comprehensive policies that guide the implementation of flexible work practices.

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