

Short Working Time and Organizational Productivity in Selected Companies in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Short working time is any pattern of work schedule that can be used to limit the maximum number of working hours an employee can spend at the workplace. An extended working period can be harmful to employees and therefore there is need to reduce it order to stimulate productivity. There are many positive aspects of short working time which among other things include employee wellbeing and psychological willingness to contribute more to the growth of the firm. This study tries to examine the relationship between short time working and organisational productivity. This study adopted a survey design to generate data from the representative sample size of 640 drawn from a total population of 1200 staff members of some selected companies in Lagos State. Descriptive questionnaires were designed, structured to collect primary sample data. The statistical tests of mean, variance and standard deviation were applied to determine the statistical significance of the study. It was revealed that short time working was significant in boosting employees' performance and organisational productivity. The study is important because as the population of the state increased and business organisations aspires to remain competitive to take the advantage of the growing market, there is need to realign the work schedule to accommodate people of different work interests.

Key Words: *Employee Performance, Leisure Preference, Personal Health, Safety Consciousness, Short Working Time, Work Environment, Work-Related Stress.*

Introduction

Defining working time is important not only as a matter of productivity but also for its important bearing on how gains from growth will be distributed both among the employees and among various stakeholders of the organization. This point to the implication of the number of hours workers spend in the work place. A more realistic view of the working time may be taken by considering its effect on employees' health, safety and family-life balance rather than the absolute result of productivity.

Working time is described as the number of hours an employee can commit in his work places. The appropriate number of working hours is generally determined by national agreements. Almost all countries have national laws dictating working hours and limiting the maximum number of consecutive work hours, maximum number of weekly work hours and minimum duration of rest periods (Ji-Won Seo, 2011). Again he said every long hour had been shown to be harmful to economic efficiency, as well as to the material and moral welfare of the workers and to be incompatible with political democracy.

Turning to a comparison of a short working time with a long working time, we find that both interfere with the choice between income and leisure and that the income also interferes with the choice between well-being and future security. The well-being of the worker is more paramount in determining the level of the workers productivity and this can be proved by how long the worker is held busy in the work places.

It is generally believed that reductions in working hours increase labour productivity (ILO, 2004). Short working time can be implemented by a reduction of working hours or at least reducing excessively long working hours defined by ILO as a period exceeding 48 hours per week (ILO, 2004). Also organization of working time can be made to be part of the process involved in the reduction of unsocial working hours (evening/night work and weekend work) which in itself is a short working time.

Short working time creates appropriate rest breaks and daily or weekly rest periods and aims at minimizing wasted time at work places short working time has the effects of increasing productivity. As is frequently true, actual practice of short working time tends to improve mental and physical health required to remain alert in the work places thereby improving labour productivity. Productivity is a measure of the relationship between output and input. The contribution of labour market and other factors when compared with the output tends to explain the level of productivity. Labour is the coordinating factor in the production process and must be organized in such a way that is true from disruption or break down. Presumably, the choice of short working time is based on the assumption that its contribution in the work places is a better predictor of future productivity than the long working time.

Statement of the Problem

It is generally viewed in this connection that the best way to increase productivity is to adjust the working time arrangement from long working time to short working time. In this process, productivity might be increased as workers should be more efficient in a process where the labour capital is as yet very low and there will be a redistribution of usable labour energy across all organizations in the country. Moreover, it holds out the hope that practicing organizations after a successful take off can continue their growth independently with workers that are healthy, safe and enjoy family-life balance in addition it has been revealed that a rise of GNP per capita and labour productivity per hour was accompanied by a reduction of working time (Boston, 2000).

Again it was hoped that existing jobs could either be expanded to employ more people by reducing individuals working hours or that at least existing jobs would be saved and the rising, unemployment levels slowed (Anxo and O'Reilly, 2000). There has been a growing debate about working time adjustment particularly as it concerns the issue of workers' health, safety and leisure (Ji-won Seo, 2011). The central dilemma in designing a satisfactory short working time scheme lies in the divergent view of the nature of relationship between productivity of workers and short working time measured by factors that define its relevance such as stress, leisure, working environment, personal health, wages, job content and skills.

Thus, it is imperative to examine the impact of short working time on worker productivity. This is significant in view of the fact that long working hours do not encourage productivity (Shepard and Clifton, 2000). And according to Messenger (2004) since the industrial relation working time regulation has been rooted in concerns about health and safety and the preservation of free time.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been designed to generate the relevant research data for this study.

1. Can the introduction of short working time in your organisation boost your desire to put more effort in the work place?
2. How significant have you been influenced by the work environment in your organisation?

3. Is the incidence of stress in the company a major hindrance in worker productivity?
4. Is the health position of the employee a significant factor in his ability to perform in an organisation?
5. Can leisure preference be an indicator of a workers choice of a type and place of work?
6. Is the safety provision in the company sufficient enough to guarantee employee commitment and productivity?
7. Can the wage level in an organisation be influential enough to attract new workers and encourage the existing workers to devote more time to work?

Literature Review

It remains to note that the introduction of short working time need not involve much debate or efficiency cost instead it may help to relived inefficiencies which already have been seen to exist in the work places. Changes in the working time are intended to eliminate labour rigidities and distortions in the work places. Extension of working hours does not in general yield proportionate increases in total output and may even lead to an absolute reduction in total output in the long run (White, 1987).

It is also observed by Alluisi and Morgan (1982) that a general trend for longer hours was associated with lower productivity. The need to reduce the working time and probably abide in short working time is dictated by the fact that workers productivity is not only related to occupational health and safety conditions but it also has a fundamental connection with the psychological effect of working long hours (Ji-won Seo, 2011). Furthermore, he observed that when hours are reduced considerably below 40 hours per week or eight hours per day, employees have motivation to work more effectively. In other words high levels of productivity may depend on the psychological willingness of workers to use energy which has become available through shorter hours (Ji-won Seo, 2011).

Long working time is hazardous and could increase stress, illness and health of the worker. The implication of long working hours is always not favourable to the entire labour characteristics. The effects are at times over stretched to impact negatively on family-life balance. For instance Hong Kong Government encouraged employers and employees to improve their ability and skills and also communicate more with their parents and take care of their children but the employees could not do this owing to their involvement in long worker hours. Thus low motivation, productiveness and efficiency were resulted and caused decreasing business competitiveness (Ng Chimam and Tsang Wan Ling 2014). There is a variety of evidence to show that long hours of work are harmful to health, longevity, and the psychological well-being of workers (White, 1987; Spurgeon, 2003; Kerin, 2003). When workers are involved in extended working time they are bound to suffer fatigue, and stress related illness while work hazards such as chemicals, noise and repetitive notion indirectly affect workers health and well-being (Ji-won Seo, 2011).

The obvious way to view the advantage of short working time is to pursue once more the implications of long working time as it affects the well-being of the employee. Spurgeon (2003) has put forward the following reasons why long working time should not be encouraged.

- Regularly working in excess of 48 hours per week appears to constitute significant occupational and increases the risk of mental health problems
- Regularly working more than a 60 hour week and perhaps more than 50 hours per week, appears to increase the risk of cardiovascular disease
- Long hours are associated with the increased prevalence of somatic, symptoms and w health-threatening coping behaviours such as increased smoking and a poor and irregular diet
- Long hours of work can cause pre-term birth and musculoskeletal disorders in workers.

The relationship between long working time and productivity has not been favourable to workers. Workers must have been subjected to work pressures over timely have exceeding indicated increased exhaustion, feelings of sadness or depression and increased medical problems (Verite, 2004). In Nigeria majority of the

working time arrangements are tailored in favour of fixed and long working time. Efforts must be encouraged to strengthen the regulation to focus more on workers' health and safety and preservation of free time. Rest and relaxation should be part of the health and safety management. Furthermore, a distinction must be drawn between the proposition that short working time is better than long working time and the true preferences that may be influenced by extra income and the contention that productivity will be increased during short working time arrangement than the otherwise. The remedy, in this case is to improve the quality of information available about short working time so that both workers and employees may have near perfect knowledge about the benefits than to keeping on ruminating in imperfections that do not condone productivity. In this view Spurgeon (2003) explained that advanced technology increased competitiveness and customers' demands for 24 hour services and this is only possible the application of short working time through the application of short working time variations such as shift work, night work and much greater use of flexible systems and irregular hours.

Research Methods

There is widespread argument that the introduction of reduced working time would improve the working conditions of workers and consequently increase productivity in the organisation. In this study we try to explore the empirical linkage between the working hours and productivity through workers wellbeing to determine the applicability of short working time in the country. The study adopts a survey design arranged to utilise representative sample drawn from a large population with questionnaires as the specific research instrument. The population of the study consisted of 1200 staff members drawn from eight companies comprising Cadbury, Nestle, Guinness, Nigerian Breweries, Nigerian Bottling Company, Chevron Petroleum, Mobil Producing and Nigeria Agip Oil. These companies have offices in Lagos and have been found to operate different work shifts. Probability random sampling method was adopted to determine the sample size.

The sample size is 640 respondents which reflect equal representation from the population. The instrument for data collection was a descriptive questionnaires designed and structured to collect primary sample data bothering on workers' health, safety, leisure, wages, working schedules, job contents, working environment, stress and job satisfaction. Responses that were generated from the study were arranged in the order of weight using five-point scale of strong disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The questionnaire was classified into two sections with the first section (A) devoted to personal profile and the second section (B) dealing on the research variable. The statistical test of mean, variance and standard deviation were applied to ascertain the statistical significance and hypotheses testing.

Data Analysis and Results

This section precisely dealt with the analysis and interpretation of data obtained from respondents on the administered questionnaire. The data obtained from the questionnaire was used in answering the research questions.

Table 1: Analysis of extent to which health status of the worker can impinge on his ability to perform well

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	25	3.9
	Disagree	17	2.7
	Indifferent	54	8.4
	Agree	251	39.2
	Strongly Agree	293	45.8
	Total	640	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 1 shows that out of 640 respondents, about 96(15.0%) respondents are either indifferent, strongly disagreed or disagreed that health status of the worker can impinge on his ability to perform well, 544(85.0%) were of the view that health status of the worker can effect on their ability to perform well. This implies that a higher percentage of the employees were of the view that one of the factor that can hinder employees performance ability is their health status.

Table 2: Analysis of the extent to which leisure preference can influence the desire to choose a type and place of work

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	18	2.8
	Disagree	37	5.8
	Indifferent	94	14.7
	Agree	93	14.5
	Strongly Agree	398	62.2
	Total	640	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 2 reveals that about 149(23.3%) respondents were either indifferent, strongly disagreed or disagreed that leisure preference can influence the desire to choose a type and place of work, 491(76.7%) were of the opinion that leisure preference can sway the employee desire to choose a type and place of work. Thus, leisure preference often influence the workers desire to select a type and place of work.

Table 3: Analysis of the extent to which the safety provision in the organisation can guarantee commitment and productivity

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	13	2.0
	Disagree	15	2.3
	Indifferent	48	7.5
	Agree	86	13.4
	Strongly Agree	478	74.7
	Total	640	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 3 shows that about 76(11.8%) respondents were either indifferent, strongly disagreed or disagreed that the safety provision in the organisation can guarantee commitment and productivity, while the remaining 564(88.1%) were of the opinion that the safety provision can guarantee employee commitment and productivity. Thus, every employee always sees safety provision as a mechanism that can make them retained, committed and productive.

Table 4: Analysis, extent to which the present wage level can attract new workers & retain existing ones

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	15	2.3
	Disagree	65	10.2
	Indifferent	69	10.8
	Agree	260	40.6
	Strongly Agree	231	36.1
	Total	640	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 4 above shows that about 149(23.3%) respondents were either indifferent, strongly disagreed or disagreed that the present wage level can attract new workers and retain the existing ones, while 491(76.7%) were of the opinion that the present wage level can attract new employees and retain the existing ones. Therefore, the current pay/salary level can interest new employees and retain the existing ones.

Table 5: Analysis of the extent of influence of work environment on employee performance

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	8	1.3
	Disagree	16	2.5
	Indifferent	27	4.2
	Agree	192	30.0
	Strongly Agree	397	62.0
	Total	640	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 5 above shows that about 51(8.0%) respondents were either indifferent, strongly disagreed or disagreed that work environment have influence on employee performance, while 589(92.0%) were of the opinion that work environment have effect on employee performance. Therefore, employees work environment is a strategic determinant of the quality of employees work and their level of productivity/performance at the workplace.

Table 6: Analysis of the impact of work-related stress on employee performance

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	75	11.7
	Disagree	31	4.8
	Indifferent	42	6.6
	Agree	285	44.5
	Strongly Agree	207	32.3
	Total	640	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 6 above shows that about 148(23.2%) respondents were either indifferent, strongly disagreed or disagreed that work-related stress have impact on employee performance, while 492(76.8%) were of the opinion that work-related stress have influence on employee performance. Thus, one of the organisational outcomes that are affected by work-related stress is performance, stresses increases the chances of fatal errors lowering job performance or significantly reduces the employees work performance and vice versa.

Table 7: Analysis of the impact of short working time arrangement on employee performance

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	19	3.0
	Disagree	27	4.2
	Indifferent	40	6.3
	Agree	356	55.6
	Strongly Agree	198	30.9
	Total	640	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 7 shows that about 86(13.5%) respondents were either indifferent, strongly disagreed or disagreed that short working time arrangement have impact on employee performance, while 554(86.5%) were of the belief that short working time arrangement have influence on employee performance. This implies that short working time arrangement have influence on employee performance in an organisation.

Table 8: Mean and Standard deviations of the respondents view on research question

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Health status of the worker can impinge on his ability to perform well	640	1.00	5.00	4.2031	.97992
Leisure preference can influence the desire to choose a type and place of work	640	1.00	5.00	4.2750	1.08598
The safety provision in the organisation can guarantee commitment and productivity	640	1.00	5.00	4.5641	.88402
The present wage level can attract new workers and retain the existing ones	640	1.00	5.00	3.9797	1.04270
Influence of work environment on employee performance	640	1.00	5.00	4.4906	.79704
Impact of work-related stress on employee performance	640	1.00	5.00	3.8094	1.26636
Impact of short working time arrangement on employee performance	640	1.00	5.00	4.0734	.89648
Valid N (listwise)	640				

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 8 above shows the distribution of respondents according to research question which focuses on relationship between short working time arrangement variables (personal health, leisure preference, safety consciousness, wage level, work environment, work-related stress and short working time) and employee performance in the organisations, the table shows that the respondents agreed on the views that health status of the worker can impinge on his ability to perform well, leisure preference can influence the desire to choose a type and place of work, the safety provision in the organisation can guarantee commitment and productivity.

Furthermore, it was opined that the present wage level can attract new workers and retain the existing ones, in the same manner, work environment and work-related have influence on employee performance, in addition, short working time arrangement have influence on employee performance. Finally, that there is a positive relationship between all short working time variables and employee performance in the selected manufacturing companies with means 4.20, 4.28, 4.56, 3.98, 4.49, 3.81 and 4.07 as well as corresponding standard deviation of 0.98, 1.09, 0.88, 1.04, 0.80, 1.27, and 0.90 respectively.

Discussion

In accordance with the results, it is revealed that employees' performance can be negatively affected by factors associated with fixed-term working schedules (Ji-won Seo, 2011). The results indicated that failure to adhere to safety consciousness can have greatest impact on workers performance. The mean score of 4.56 ranked 1st confirmed this assertion which was supported by (Ibid). Furthermore, work environment in the organisation was revealed to have the second (4.49) highest negative influence on workers performance. Another important finding is the implication of personal health which was ranked 4th (4.20) as another factor that can reduce workers performance. Extended working hours can impact against employee performance (Ng Chi man and Tsang Won Ling, 2014, Ji-won Seo, 2011).

Road congestion and traffic jam was identified as another important militating employee performance. A reduction on working time will reduce the rate of workers on the road and less exposure to burn out due to

traffic congestion and jam (Boston, 2000). Other factors that can reduce the rate of employee performance include leisure preference, wage level, family life balance and work-related stress. This finding was supported by the findings of Anxo and O'Reilly (2000) and Messenger (2000).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study therefore concluded that short working time can play a significant role in improving employee performance and organisational productivity. In many developed nations, it was revealed that a reduction in working periods can lead to higher GNP and organisational productivity (Boston, 2000). Thus, long working hours do not encourage productivity (Shepard and Clifton, 2000). It is important that organisations that are based in large cities like Lagos State can as well resort to short working arrangement.

It is recommended that short working arrangement should be accommodated as a work schedule in the country. This is important in view of the stressful nature of work environment characterised in fixed term working. Short working arrangement should also be encouraged to increase working opportunity for those that cannot secure long hour work schedule. It can be introduced to assist persons like students to pay for tuitions and lessen the burden on others.

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