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Alternative Work Arrangements in Nigeria: Is it avoidable by Modern Organizations?

ABOGUNRIN, Abiodun Peter¹;
AREMU, Nuha Salihu¹;
ABDULLAH, Adewumi Sulaiman¹
and LAWAL, Azeez Tunbosun²

¹Department of Industrial Relations and Personnel Management,
Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Ilorin,
Ilorin, Nigeria

²Department of Business Administration,
Faculty of Management Sciences,
Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria.

*Corresponding Author's email: abogunrin.ap@unilorin.edu.ng

Abstract

Alternative work arrangement is growing in use across countries of the world because of population increase on a daily basis due to migration. This has created imbalance in workers' survivability across the globe. Thus, this study examined the effect of level of acceptability of alternative work arrangements on the practice of alternative work arrangements as necessity among city workers. The study employed a survey research with 121 staff of Globacom Telecommunication Company in Lagos metropolis. 121 sample size was determined using Taro Yamane [1967] formula for estimating sample size from the population of 174 staff housed at their headquarter, while correlation was used to analyse the relationship between the variables. The correlation result [0.591] revealed a strong positive relationship between level of acceptability of alternative work arrangements and its practice in workplaces with $p = 0.001$ indicating that level of acceptability of alternative work arrangements is significant on organizations' survival making its practice as a necessity. In conclusion, it is a necessity for modern organizations to start thinking of alternative work arrangements in their operation as an unavoidable work schedule and the study therefore recommended that alternative work arrangements should be introduced into workplace practice with commensurate infrastructural development from all stakeholders so that organizations can stay

alive and not lose their talents to competitions.

Keywords: Alternative work arrangements; flexible working; competitive performance management; organization; modern organisations

Introduction

Since the beginning of time, man has always occupied himself with work. This phenomenon has made him grow in all facet of his existence. Work is an everyday event that takes a good portion of the day from people that engage in it because it takes effort and time to complete (Mohamed, 2018).

However, as modernization continue to unfold unabatedly, complexities have also grown around the world of work (Atayero, 2017). Work used to take place in very close locations to people many decades back, but that is not the case with so many millions of people today.

Population has increased in cities across the world because of mobility of labour and infrastructural deficiencies that has triggered rural-urban drift. Houses are congested, streets are filled with cars and on and on, we can continue to list all the aches that surround the world of work in our modern time (Supreet, Kremer & Mullainathan, 2015). However, with all these growing challenges, a major way of making life satisfactory for employees in the age of increased pressure is through alternative work arrangements (De Menezes, 2011).

Just as we know, there is no problem that does not have solution, and as such, when the problem of work stress and its consequences began to take its toll on workers, a new line of thought began to creep into men's heart and the movement for better work and life was born (Barling, Inness & Gallagher, 2002).

In the attempt of workers to balance their work with their family, a movement called alternative work arrangements was birthed, and promoted greatly by the recent global pandemic- Covid-19, that forced the entire work community to seek for alternative means of staying productive (ILO press release, 2020).

All the job hassles that people go through are thrown under the light of creative thinking of both managers and workers even government is throwing its weight behind the promotion and acceptance of alternative work arrangements (Nye, 2010).

If there are no alternatives to a more balanced work and life, productivity will be in jeopardy and that means not only the worker directly involved will suffer, but the nation at large and every other stakeholder around such worker. Moreover, a question to be asked from modern organizations in Nigeria whether they can avoid this global trend or not (Waiganjo & Kihoro, 2016). All across the big cities of the world, alternative work arrangements are growing in use because of the

solution it proffers to the workers and the economy (Mas & Pallais, 2017).

In the wake of the last century, migration across the globe, to western world, has made it practically uneconomical to be keeping all workers of corporation under the same roof at the same time because of the growing demand on workers life ranging from personal to family matters (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). In addition to these trends, there are workers in several organizations that are thousands of kilometres away from each other, which may only function optimally and satisfactorily through the adoption of alternative work arrangements (Loan, Codruta & Patricia, 2010).

Benefits are recorded in firms that adopt alternative work arrangements across the developed world but what is unclear in this part of the world is whether we will continue to choke our city workers with daily work hassles or we will, like the developed world, consider adopting this phenomenon.

It is therefore in the background of the foregoing that this study seeks to examine whether alternative work arrangements is avoidable by modern organizations in Nigeria using organizations that are located in Lagos central business district as case study.

Statement of Problem

Alternative work arrangement is gaining popularity in the world of work all across the globe according to (Nye, 2010). However, the issue with Nigeria is the level of preparedness to face this reality and accept it as part of workplace norms in the 21st century.

For alternative work arrangements to become part of the consideration in the world of work in Nigeria there are some basic infrastructures that must be in place like access to ICT and other supporting infrastructures and facilities.

The challenge of keeping work and life at a balance is another factor that should be in consideration when alternative work arrangement is being considered. Modern workers are stressed to the limit when it comes to commuting back and forth work.

Furthermore, the availability of workers with specific skills and competence in particular locations, which may be far from employers' location, contributes to the reason why alternative work arrangement is necessary for modern organizations in Nigeria.

In the light of the above preamble, modern organizations in Nigeria may not be able to escape the adoption of alternative work arrangement in order for them to be able to measure up with their counterparts in the western world and other developed economies.

Research Question

The question that this study seeks to answer is stated herewith: does acceptability

of alternative work arrangement among workforce significantly influence organizational survival? Whether organizations in Nigeria as a growing economy, particularly in our cities, will be able to avoid the use of alternative work arrangements in the midst of growing work hassles that people go through on daily basis in our time.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to examine the effect of acceptability of alternative work arrangements among city workers on modern organization survival; hence, the need for the study in investigating its necessity in modern day organization in Lagos metropolis. As people struggle back and forth work in cities across Nigeria, there will be what can be done, in their own opinion that can bring solution to the headaches surrounding their work.

It is this perception that this study seeks to examine among Nigeria modern organizations workers in order to know whether alternative work arrangements can be jettisoned or not.

In specific term, the study seeks to examine the level of acceptability of alternative work arrangements on the well-being of staff that need to be productive for organizations to survive in this modern age.

Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis is objective stated in nullity (Kothari and Gaurav, 2014) and as it is in this study, the objective is to examine the influence of acceptability of alternative work arrangements among city workers on modern organizations' survival.

Therefore, the hypothesis in this work is:

H₀: Acceptability of alternative work arrangements does not have significant influence on modern organizations' survival.

Literature Review

Conceptual Clarifications

Alternative Work Arrangements

The context of work is changing very rapidly across the globe and this phenomenon has compelled organizations to rethink the way work is being done (Atayero, 2017). Alternative work arrangement is any alteration to the traditional way in which work is done that produces same or better result (Lutz, 2012). At times, it is referred to as flexible work arrangements or flexible work schedules.

The troubles of transportation through heavy traffic to work and from work is one of the reasons, why workplaces are seeking alternatives and alteration of their work pattern in order to remain competitive and efficient (Waigango & Kihoro, 2016). If workers spend the whole day in the traffic jam, the question one begins

to ask is what time will be left for work to be done in the workplace.

Another problem facing modern organizations that has necessitated research into alternative work arrangements is space. The cities are growing at a rate that put infrastructures under pressure and as such, there is need to manage space for offices and other vehicular movements in and around the cities (Rau & Hyland, 2002).

Modifications to the schedule, location and way that work is done in a workplace fall under alternative work arrangements. In addition, the work that is usually done by 10am on a particular day can be modified to be done either earlier or later under alternative work arrangements (Subramony et al, 2018). So also is the location, where the work is done from: it can be modified to suit and serve a particular purpose with benefits accruing to all parties involved.

Types of Alternative Work Arrangements

1. Compressed work schedule
2. Flexible start and end times
3. Reduced hours
4. Job sharing
5. Remote work
6. Telecommuting

Compressed Workweeks

This is defined as an alternative work arrangement that grants employee to work 40-hour workweek in 3-10 days within two weeks (Bliss and Thornton, 2010).

Under this arrangement, employees can compress their work schedule into fewer days so as not to show up at work on some days within the working week.

The idea behind this is to free-up time for employees to cater for other aspects of their lives, which need to be balanced for productivity sake.

Flexible Start and end times

Eldridge and Nisar (2011) opined that traditional time for starting and ending work on a typical work day can be altered with the sole purposes of reducing absences from work and reduction in vehicular jams.

As the name of this arrangement suggests, starting and finishing work time are replaced by a policy that allows the employee to choose the time to appear and disappear from work.

There is need for understanding in handling flexible start and end times alternative work arrangement because the components must be taken care of. A major component of flexitime is CORE TIME – and this is a period within the working day that all employees are expected to be at work. It is within this core time that an employee can choose to arrive and leave the workplace (Hicks & Klimoski, 1981).

Rather than agonizing on how to handle the home front and office mad rush, allowance is created for employees to get to work within the core hour to balance his/her life as much as possible and not jeopardize performance. Work-life-balance is a huge concept that has gained ascendancy in human resource practice across the globe and modern organizations may not be able to close their eyes to anything that can promote it particularly alternative work arrangements.

Reduced hours

This is alternative work arrangement that requires that a worker observe a work schedule that is below full-time.

In other words, the meaning is found in the name-reduced hours. For example, if an employee works 8 hours in a day, the hours may be reduced to 5 hours or less, depending on what was arranged with the employer. The adjustment will ultimately benefit both the employer and the employee in one way or the other (Eldridge & Nisar, 2011).

Job Sharing

Society for Human Resource Management defined job sharing as the event of having two different employees doing the tasks of one full-time position. This alternative work arrangement allows two people to handle the job that one person will do in the event of that one person being a full-time jobholder.

Illustratively, two employees with each one taking 10 hours can share a 20-hour task. Another typical example is a 5-day task for a full-time staff being split into two and a half-day for two employees.

Job sharing is different from part-time in the sense that it involves two different employees handling the job of a full-time staff (Bliss & Thornton, 2010).

Lutz (2012) wrote about the benefits of job sharing both to the organization practicing it and the employees involved in it. He also mentioned that the practice of job sharing is not as common as other forms of alternative work arrangements.

Remote Work

Remote work is a form of alternative work arrangement whereby workers do not get to leave their home for the work. Tasks, completed, and submitted from home via computer networks and other ICT devices. The difference between remote working and telecommuting is that remote worker will never have to leave home for office at any time but telecommuter have period of showing up at the site/office in order to continue/finish task(s).

Telecommuting

This is a work arrangement that allows employees to spend part of their time

working off-site, most of the time at home. E-mails, computer networks, and other technology can empower employees to stay in close contact with their office and do as much work as if they are in the office location. While this arrangement does not come very free of shortcomings, it is beneficial to both employees and employers.

The employees will escape the hustle and bustle life of going to and coming from work. They can combine the work at home with other assignment that may be of personal interest.

Moreover, not every telecommuter has the courage to leave breakfast table for their desk to start work. In addition, scheduling meeting with employees may not be easy since every worker have different days of showing up at work.

The growing difficulties that surround going back and forth work and that of office expenses plus parking space challenges have made it necessary for flexible working arrangements to be made in the 21st century world we live in.

Concept of Organization Survival

Organization survival means the ability of stakeholders in organizations to creatively and painstakingly, on a continual basis, navigate the turbulent environment in which they operate to remain in service to the point where their costs are covered with little or no profit (Cutlip, 2019). There are proactive steps that can be taken in ensuring organizations survive in modern time as we are in which scholars have looked into. Oloda (2017) evaluated strategies that could assist firms to the ever-changing world of business environment out of which alternative work arrangements form a vital part.

The link between organization survival and alternative work arrangements has gotten to a point where stakeholders do not have the luxury of not creating different work arrangements that will ensure that their firms make it through the uncertainties surrounding their operations as witnessed in COVID-19 pandemic (Subramony, Solnet, Groth, Yagil, Hartley, Beomcheol Kim & Galubovskaya, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) explains the relationship of a person to his or her work environment. This theory seeks to describe the impact of work environment on the person that is doing the work. Is there satisfaction and/or motivation given the circumstances that surround the work a worker does? There is a way the work environment significantly affects the outcome or result that an employee generates at work. If the environment is not inspiring, no matter how creative or talented a worker is, there is bound to be crisis (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, the satisfaction, motivation and inspiration plus freedom of choice that alternative work arrangements offer modern day workers makes it suitable

for this research work to settle for theory of work adjustment (TWA) in theorizing this study. It is also referred to as *the person-environment correspondence theory* and was developed by Rene Dawis, George England and Lloyd Lofquist in University of Minnesota in 1964.

“Drivers” of Alternative Work Arrangements

Modern organizations cannot overlook the need for flexible working as rapid changes continue to upturn traditional work settings.

These changes have brought about both benefits and challenges that make it almost mandatory for organizations that will maximize their human capital to consider their operations and take necessary actions in order to remain competitive in their respective industries.

In convincing organizations to embrace flexible working arrangements, the change in context of work that is creating new opportunities and challenges must be explained to decision makers and the opportunities are embedded in the following points:

1. **Advanced Technologies:** This is a benefit triggered by continual improvement in technology that has led to reduction in cost of performing operations across all industries. Work that is more complex has to be standardized and computerized leading to automation thereby giving room to employees to better manage their time. In addition, there has been increased collaboration with different people in different locations all leading to agility and flexibility. The advancement in technology has made it possible for knowledge sharing that transcend territories and create virtual based working arrangements across the globe. All of these developments allows modern worker to arrange his life around his work in a meaningful and purposeful manner.
2. **New Societal Values:** There is a yearning by employees all over the world for their work to have meaning and purpose and this has created a global push that makes workers to desire to design their work in such a way that it will be personally meaningful to them. Autonomy and choice is equally growing in the society globally for agility and mobility. Instead of employers designing the way employees work – which is the traditional mode of relationship in the workplace, employees want to design their work pace and at their own designed location.
3. **Changing Demographics:** There is a phenomenal increase in the number of years that people are expected to live due to advancement in healthcare and wellness business and this has triggered the blend of older workers mixing with younger workers to share different lifestyles in the same workplace. This blend ultimately calls for alternative work arrangements

for these different people.

Also, the emergence of people staying longer in the workplace for a longer period is making multiple generations of people to work together simultaneously (Gratton, 2012). This may mean a marriage of inconvenience of some sort that calls for creativity in the way work is arranged in order to avoid unhealthy conflict in the organization. The lifestyle of Baby Boomers is different from that of Generation X (1965-1979) and Generation Y (1980-1994). In addition, according to Lyons and Kuron(2014), Generation Z (1995-2000) people will be in the workforce by 2020 with its unique challenges. So, all of these drive modern organization toward alternative work arrangements.

4. **Rapid Globalization:** This strong force is driving organizations into creating alternative work arrangements. The entire world is rapidly shrinking to become a global village where everyone have instant access to each other through technology.

Consumers all over the world are shifting to a culture of 24/7 access to goods and services and this culture cannot be sustained by the traditional work setting of the past centuries. The ability to connect to and understand customers require that organizations become agile and flexible in their approach and as such sends a signal of alternative work settings to the firm.

In addition, there is limit to what firms can do to with resource control, as they do not have all the resources they need. Sustaining growth and maintaining the global populace is equally forcing organizations into creating alternatives in their work schedules.

Carbon emission is a big challenge in commuting employees and running offices and if the earth will be sustained according to environmentalists, there is need for organizations to adopt more efficient way of working that will depend less on carbon emitters (Gratton, 2012).

Company-Specific Benefits of Alternative Work Arrangements

AnyConnect at Cisco

This platform created by Cisco and available to all employees provides access to the Cisco network from any location using any device. This platform ensures a seamless working experience comparable to Cisco office set-up.

Business Continuity at Ernst and Young

Flexible working has allowed many employees to work in ways that more closely match the needs of their customers by moving away from the traditional 9 to 5 setup and towards a more blended working life that acknowledges individual project needs.

Office Savings at BT

Since the 1980, BT has been adapting its physical infrastructure to embed flexibility. Today, Bi employs around 70,000 flexible workers, saving around \$700 million a year in property and reducing absenteeism by 60% (Gratton, 2012)

General Benefits of Alternative Work Arrangement

1. **Increase in employee productivity** as recorded by many organizations that have bought into alternative work arrangements.
 2. **Virtual Teams becoming more pronounced and effective** – This is seen across the globe of people working together and not having to be together physically in a location thereby reducing cost of travel and office space.
 3. **Customers' needs are better met:** Alternative work arrangements gives room to face global environment by empowering businesses for continuity and customer coverage. Zones and locations do not have to be a barrier with the help of technology under alternative work arrangements.
 4. **Reduction in business travel:** carbon emissions and congestion are reduced to a good percentage with alternative work arrangements. Works can be done and submitted without physical movement and this reduces costs and risks.
 5. **Customers' expectations are matched and at times exceeded:** In a modern world where customers demand for 24/7, access to goods and services, alternative work arrangements have made it possible with real time access to products and services coupled with real time customer care.
 6. **Agility of infrastructure:** By buying into flexible working, tangible infrastructural savings can be recorded by reducing office space usage. Furniture, equipment and fittings consume space in offices and once the cost of using such is known, a flexible arrangement can be created around it that will crash the cost.
- In addition, energy is another source of cost in an office, particularly in data centres in offices. Cloud-based computing is eliminating such costs under alternative work arrangements that promote flexibility.

Empirical Framework

Katz and Krueger (2016) conducted research into the rise of the use of alternative work arrangements, in the United States in late 2015 and they found out that between 2005 and 2015, there is an increase in the percentage of temporary help agency workers (on-call workers, contract workers, independent contractors/freelancers) from 10.07% to 15.8% alone. They also found out that percentage of workers hired out through contract companies showed the largest rise from 1.4% in 2005 to 3.1% in 2015.

Blix and Sorenson (2016) examined the perceptions of participants and non-participants in alternative work arrangements. The outcome of their study is that participants in alternative work arrangements are really having a good time with their work and personal lives as they enjoy greater level of freedom and productivity while non-participants are a bit not sure of what the outcome will be since they have not experienced it.

The participants, according to the study, seem to be more positive about the balance they are enjoying and hope that non-participants will give it a trial (Owoyemi, Elegbede & Gbajumo-Sheriff, 2011).

White (2018) examined the career penalties associated with part-time working arrangement using data from big four professional services firms in the United States. His study found that part-time workers returning to full-time work were bias penalized and labelled as employees with low commitment when supervisors have fewer or limited information about them. This, the supervisors do by relying on heuristics. However, when the same supervisors have better information about the workers, the performance evaluation score penalties were minimized.

Methodology

The methodology of this search work is descriptive in nature with a survey design because the study seeks to examine the acceptability of alternative work arrangements among city workers in Lagos metropolis.

The population of the study is made up of workers in corporate headquarters of Globacom, a telecommunication outfit located on Lagos Island. Globacom has a total staff strength of 3,379 as at June 2019. One hundred and seventy-four of these staff are housed in the headquarter located on Adeola Odeku, Lagos Island. This firm was selected because it satisfies all parameters of modern organization as operationalized in the literature.

Sample size of 121 was determined using Taro Yamane (1967) formula for sample size determination among the senior staff of the telecommunications company.

$$\text{Sample size} = N / 1 + N(e)^2$$

$$\text{Sample Size} = 174 / 1 + 174(.05)^2 = 121$$

Data Collection

The administered questionnaires were reduced to 93 upon return, which represents 77.5% of the total questionnaire sent out. These were duly filled and became the source of data for this study.

The questionnaire was segmented into two parts: the first part was respondents'

biodata while the second part was about information and questions concerning the phenomenon in study.

The study employed 5 points Likert scale of Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Disagree (3), Strongly Disagree (2), and Do not know (1).

Data collection & Analysis

Questionnaire was the primary source of data collection for this research work. The study employed correlation coefficients and regression as tools of analysis for the data collected. Student t-test was used to test the hypothesis formulated from the research objective.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The data collected were analyzed and discussed with the hypothesis testing coming first

Test of Hypothesis

HO: Acceptability of alternative work arrangements does not have significant influence on modern organizations' survival in Lagos metropolis.

Table 1

Computation of simple regression of level of acceptance of alternative work arrangements among city workers on organizations' survival in Nigeria.

t-value	Variables	Coefficients	Std. Error	Sig.
	Constant	7.621	0.263	0.032
	Acceptability of AWA	0.636	0.049	0.001
	R^2	0.593		
	F-value	162.753		

Statistically Significant at 5% level

Source: Field Survey Data (2018)

The data in Table 1 shows the estimate of regression of the necessity of alternative work arrangements among city workers that were sampled in the study. The coefficient of determination is 0.593 and the meaning is that 59.3% variability in level of acceptance (necessity of alternative work arrangements among the city the model explains workers, while the remaining 40.7% was not explained by the model. The analysis showed that acceptability (necessity) level among city workers influenced alternative work arrangements positively and this positive relationship is significant at 5% level.

The F-value (calculated) of 162.753 is greater than the F-value (tabulated) of 6.84. The $p = 0.001$ value indicates that level of acceptance of alternative work arrangements is statistically significant at 5%. Student t-test showed 0.001 which

means that organizations survival is significantly influenced by acceptability of alternative work arrangements and this necessitated the rejection of the null hypothesis and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The hypothesis that was tested in this study showed that alternative work arrangements is statistically significant when it comes to organizations' survival in modern day work schedule among city workers in Nigeria (Waiganjo & Kihoro, 2016). Therefore, the conclusion of this study is that level of acceptability of alternative work arrangements among city workers influence organizations' survival thereby making it unavoidable in this modern age, thus, it becomes a necessity that cannot be jettisoned (De Menezes, 2011; Katz & Krueger, 2016).

Furthermore, with the analysis of the data and the result that study came up with, it is recommended that:

- a. Organizations that are desirous of staying alive competitive and thrive in this modern age should introduce alternative work arrangements into their system in order to bring the best out of their workers through flexibility that it affords and not to lose their talents rivals.
- b. Awareness should be created among the regular members of employees on the benefits of alternative work arrangements by management of organizations and possible benefits should be attached to workers who are ready to give it a trial.
- c. Infrastructures should be invested in consciously by organizations to build capacity for the practice of alternative work arrangements. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a key hub on which majority of different types of alternative work arrangements revolves around (Subramony et al, 2018). Thus, workers should be empowered both in acquisition and training in the use of devices and network that enhance alternative work arrangements.
- d. Support from government through policy thrust and financial involvement in funding some infrastructures that enhance the practice of alternative work arrangements is recommended (Blix & Sorensen, 2016; Dartmouth College Employment Policies and Procedures Manual, 2018). This is because there are some infrastructures that private business operators may not be able to fund e.g. Subways and tunnels, which facilitate flexibility in movement of both goods and people. Government can, and should be involved in such and with that in place; the stage will be set for flexibility, which is a key feature of alternative work arrangements.

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