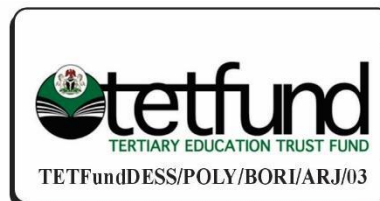


FLEXIBLE WORK ENVIRONMENT AND THE AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT OF EMPLOYEES IN MONEY DEPOSIT BANKS IN RIVERS STATE



Nna-Emmanuel, S.W.

**Department of Office Technology and management,
Ken Saro-Wiwa Polytechnic, Bori**
sarahnnna01@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to x-ray flexible work environment and the affective commitment of employees in commercial banks in Rivers State Three (3) hypotheses guided the study. Correlational survey design was adopted. The population of the study comprises of all operation staff in a branch of each commercial bank in Rivers State. A total of eighteen banks were used, and the total number of operation staff in these banks is 172. A total of 116 operation staff were selected as sample for the study using the Krejcie and Morgan table. Based on a total sample size of 116. Cronbach Alpha was used to establish the reliability of the instrument and an overall coefficient of 0.76 was obtained. Data collected were all imputed into SPSS version 21, Pearson's product moment correlation was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. All hypotheses were rejected and alternative hypothesis stated as P-values were less than 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that flexible resumption time, compressed work week and remote working have a strong positive relationship with the affective commitment of employees in money deposit banks in River State. It was recommended that Management of Banks should put in place flexible work environments that allows for flexible resumption time, compressed work week and remote working to enable workers take care of some personal needs, which would in turn make them committed to the organization.

Keywords: *Organizational policies; work-life balance; Affective, Continuance and Normative Commitments*

Introduction

The survival, success and sustainability of organizations lie in the strong and unalloyed commitment of its employees. Commitment is a person's belief in a course and resolves to pursue that course willingly, intentionally, voluntarily, actively, passionately and relentlessly (Akinyemi 2004). Kanter (1968) as cited in Akinyemi (2014) succinctly describes commitment as "the willingness of social actors to give their energy and loyalty to social systems which are seen as self-expressive". Organizational commitment connotes an individual's strong belief in, and acceptance of organizational goals and values, readiness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organizations and a strong desire to remain with the organization. (Mowday, Porter and Steers, 1982 as cited in Mohammed and Abdullah 2016, Hart and Willower, 2001).

While it is true that organizations require employees who would be committed to their visions and goals, and are able to meet up with their set targets. it appears that such committed employees are scarce in most organizations today. especially in the banking sector. (Ahiazu and Asawo 2009; 2008; and Okpara 2004). This may be because most banks have tried to get employees committed through various means that may have failed to give them the desired result. A sound and profitable banking sector is key to the stability of a country's financial system. The importance of this sector cannot be over-emphasized (Athanasoglo, Brissimis and Delis, 2005). Ebiringa (2011) opined that the banking sector is the most stressed out sector in the world. Who is been stressed out? Off course the employees, Epic (2011), noted that "the Nigerian banking sector is known for long hour culture and high work load of employees". The employees who are at the receiving end are most times not considered.

Rather than coerce employees to comply with organizational goals through strict supervision, standardization of processes, a promise of job security, difficult daily targets, provision of modern office facilities to simplify the work processes, and extensive and stringent rules, banks should engage methods that would appeal to and satisfy the social, emotional and psychological needs of employees, which would facilitate their voluntary involvement and identification with the value and goals of these organizations (Mittai and Mittai, 2005). One of such methods banks could employ, may be to ensure each employees enjoy an enabling work environment that would allow for flexible work arrangements, Organizations should begin to apply more human methods. that would appeal to and meet the social and emotional needs of employees and facilitate voluntary employee

involvement and identification with the values and goals of organizations (Mattai and Mattai 2015).

Commitment cannot be forced, it is voluntary and must be earned. Several authors have defined commitment in different ways. Some earlier researchers like Brickman (1987) says commitment is “a force that stabilizes individual behavior under circumstances where the individual would otherwise be tempted to change that behavior”. It is “an obliging force which requires that the person honor the commitment even in the face of fluctuating attitudes and whims” (Brown 1996). It is a psychological state that binds the individual to the organization (Allen and Meyer 1990). A committed employee is said to be one who supports the organization in good times and bad times, attends to his work regularly, defend the organization, and support the organizations goals and objectives and is willing to remain loyal to the organization despite all odds.

A growing consensus has emerged in recent years that commitment should be seen as a multidimensional construct. Allen and Meyer (1990) developed an early model that has become the most popular in the literatures on organizational commitment. The three dimensional model of commitment developed by Allen and Meyer (1991) view commitment first as “an emotional attachment to, and identification with, and an involvement in the organization, (Affective commitment) the second is a feeling of obligation to continue in the employment, (Normative commitment), the third is a considerate of the cost associated with leaving the organization (Continuance commitment)”. This study is however focused on the first dimension of the model (Affective commitment).

Affective commitment refers to the employees’ passionate desire to identify with and give support to the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990). It is the affection an employee feels or a strong personal attachment an employee feels for his job and organization according to Allen & Meyer, 1990, “it is the employees’ emotional attachment to identification with and involvement in the organization”. Affective commitment is seen by Meyer & Herscovitch (2001) as “a force that bonds an individual to a course of action that is of relevance to a particular target. Affectively committed employees have a sense of belonging that increases their involvement in the organizational activities, and passion to pursue organizational goals and remain with the organization (Meyer and Allen 1991, 1997, Mowday, Porter and Steers 1982). They are workers who are willing to go extra mile for their organization. (Bergman, 2006, Jha, 2011).

Employee with high affective commitment proceed with jobs in the organization because they are willing to do so, not because of pressure or compulsion (Almacik, Almacik, Akain and Erat, 2012, Jain Giga and Cooper, 2013, Patrick and Sonia 2012). Employees with high affective commitment can go as far as investing their resources just to achieve the desires organizational goals. this explains why any organization that would thrive today must make frantic efforts to earn the affective commitment of their employees. one easy way organizations can win the loyalty of their employees today is by adopting a flexible work environment.

Flexible Work Environment is a break away from the traditional nine -to -five, five days a week schedule. This work arrangement is favored by many leading tech firms and modern business offices. It involves developing a flexible plan for employees work schedules and timing. This can be done in different ways, such as - (1) Allowing the employee choose when to start his day's job, by 6am, 7am, 8am or 9am. Whatever time he starts, he should complete the eight hours of work for the day. (2) Employees can also be allowed to break the eight hours of work into two halves to enable them meet up with some other personal obligations. (3) They could choose to go with a compressed work week where an employee completes his work hours for the week in four days, instead of five or six days as the case may be. (4) they could be allowed to work remotely, may be for some days in a week. According to Janice & Johnson (2004), flexible practices are not just conducive but effective. Numerous researches have shown that blurring the boundaries between work and one's private life comes with huge positive benefits. Work can be enjoyable and appealing when the boundaries between work and leisure are blurred (Sullivan and Lewis 2001). The boundary blurring through telework showed greater productivity, higher morale, increased flexibility, and greater job satisfaction and commitment (Tremblay 2002). commercial banks may consider leveraging on the provisions of flexible work arrangements to have committed employee that would stay with them their best to the organization.

This study is very crucial considering the importance of the sector been studied. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, and from empirical evidence available, not so much studies have been carried on flexible work environment and employee commitment. a few have been done on employee performance and productivity. a number of the studies seen were outside the country. it is therefore very crucial for study on flexible work environment n the Nigerian banking sector to be carried out Nigerian banks can begin to have a sustainable and affectively committed workforce.

Statement of problem

The competitiveness and dynamism that characterize the banking sector today leaves the organizations with the constant challenge of raising and sustaining a committed workforce to be able to thrive successfully (Addae and Wang 2006). Employees are requested to spend longer hours to meet up their high targets for the day under strict supervision. This strain may be having negative effect on the employee and may have drastically reduced the level of affective, commitment among employees. This is evident in the high level of turnover that characterizes this sector (Epie 2011; Rahman 2012).

It appears that committed employees are very scarce today, as employees are noted to be very low in commitment. (Ahiazu and Asawo 2009; 2008; Okpara 2004). This may be largely because in a bid to meet up with demands of the competitive sector, banks have put so much pressure on their employees not putting into consideration their personal and family needs, and making the working conditions flexible. This makes their employees develop negative feelings that may be affecting their level of commitment. (Schermerhom 2010).

This study intends to empirically examine the impact of flexible work environment on the affective commitment of employees in commercial banks in Nigeria. This study would also contribute to the earlier identified knowledge gap through the application of empirical analysis in the investigation of the impact of the dimensions of flexible work environment (flexible resumption time; division of work hours to two halves; compressed work week and remote working and Affective Commitment.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study was to access the relationship between flexible work environment and the affective commitment of employees in money deposit banks in Rivers State. Specifically, the study accesses the relationship between

1. Flexible resumption time and employee affective commitment.
2. Compressed work week and employee affective commitment
3. Remote working and employee affective commitment.

Significance of the Study

This study would be of great benefit to management of banks and office employees. Managers of banks would realize that there are more human methods like flexible work arrangements they could employ to make their employees committed on their own volition, thereby reducing the pressure and stress and the

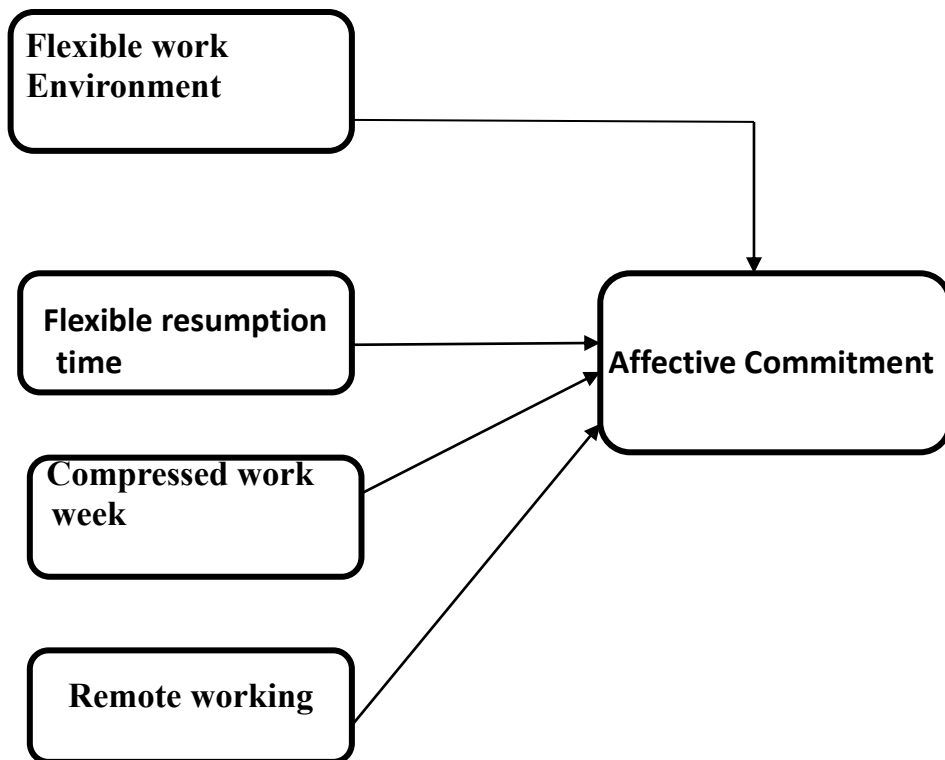
possibility of their leaving the job. Management of banks would realize that there are policies and programs that could be put in place to aid employees take care of their personal needs.

Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses would be tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. flexible resumption time has no significant relationship with employee affective commitment.
2. compressed work week has no significant relationship with employee affective commitment
3. remote working has no significant relationship with employee affective commitment.

Operational conceptual Framework



Flexible work environment and the affective commitment of employees.

Affective commitment has been defined as ‘employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in an organization (Meyer and Allen, 1990). It can be described as a force that keeps the employee bound to his/her job. This feeling of attachment and bond to his job and organization can be as a result of the fact that the personal needs and expectations of the employees match the actual experience, management support and the likes. Every employee has personal need that he/she desires to meet, these needs could be some time off work to attend to personal issues, as long as he cannot get off work to sort out some personal issues when necessary, there is this feeling of uneasiness, which can develop to pressure, stress, absent mindedness and absenteeism.

Organizations can however make available flexible work arrangement such as choosing work start time (6am, 7am, 8am or 9am), and complete eight hours of work, freedom to have 2 hours of break after the first 4 hours to enable employees attend to some other personal non work obligations, this would make employees have some level of affection for their job.

Organizations can also make available provisions like compressed work week, where an employee completes his work hours for a week in four days instead of the normal five working days. Janice & Johnson (2004), noted that flexible work arrangements are not only conducive, but effective. An employee who has these kinds of flexible work arrangements would choose what is convenient for him/her, and that would no doubt endear the organization to him as some of his personal needs would be met by the flexibility of work arrangement available to him.

To make employees affectively committed, organizations can institute policies that allow for remote working at least for some days of the week. Working from the comfort of their homes, employees would be relaxed and be able to attend to some of their personal needs. There is no gain saying that employees in organizations where these provisions are available would feel happy, and relaxed, and give their best to their job.

Theoretical Framework

The conservation of Resources (COR) theory propounded by Grandey & Cropanzano (1999), was used as a theoretical foundation for this study. The COR model offers a strong framework which argues that individuals attempt to utilize

and keep resources. Resources refer to the means of attaining ones objectives, conditions and personal characteristics that are valued by the individual, it is concerned with individuals job autonomy, social support, contingencies, established behavior outcomes etc. An individual is likely to experience stress when a potential loss of resources is perceived or when an expected resource gain fails to materialize or when there is actual loss of resources. The COR model explains that the depleted resources resulting in negative outcomes like lower job satisfaction, lower commitment and poor performance is caused by conflict between the employee personal and work life. Resources such as job autonomy and family support are responsible for a better balance of work and family lives.

The researcher considers this theory an ideal framework for the current study. This is because job autonomy, family support and the likes which the COR model presents as resources whose availability can help the employee achieve their objectives, thereby creating a balance, is in absolute agreement with the position of the current study. Job autonomy has to do with giving the employee the leverage to decide the work schedules and arrangements to go for, based on his or her personal needs per time. The researcher is therefore in absolute agreement with the postulations of this theory.

Methodology

The study utilized the correlational survey design. The population of the study comprised of all operations staff in the nineteen money deposit banks in Rivers State. The total number of staff in this category is 172. A total of 116 operation staff were therefore selected as sample for the study, using the Krejcie and Morgan table. The instrument for data collection is a 14-item questionnaire measuring the dimensions of organizational policies on a eight (8) item instrument and affective commitment measured on a six (6) item instrument. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha on SPSS version 21, which yielded an overall coefficient of 0.76. Pearson's product moment correlation was used in analyzing the relationship between the variables of this study, at a 0.05 level of significance (2-tailed).

Data Presentation, Analysis and Result

Results of the analysis on the relationship between the dimensions of organizational policies and affective commitments are presented.

Decision Rule: the basis for acceptance or rejection of null hypothesis statements is premise on the corresponding probability value (Pv) for each of the test.

Where $P \leq 0.05$, null hypothesis is rejected as it suggests a significant relationship between the variables, where as a $P > 0.05$ suggests insignificant relationship between the variables and as such the null hypothesis is accepted. Results for the bivariate analysis are presented below:

Flexible resumption time and Employee affective commitment

H₀₁ –There is no significant relationship between flexible resumption time and employee affective commitment

The first test result on the hypothesis showing a $r = 0.756$ and $P = 0.036$, reveals a significant relationship between flexible resumption time and employee's affective commitment in the banking sector of Nigeria. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected on the basis of the evidences presented. An alternative hypothesis is stated thus:

H₁ –There is a significant relationship between flexible resumption time and employee affective commitment.

			Flexible resumption time	Affect. com
Pearson's Correlation	Flexible resumption time	Corr. Coefficient	1.00	.756
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.036
		N	166	116
	Affect. Com	Corr. Coefficient	.756	1.00
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.036	
		N	116	166

			Compressed work week	Affect. com
Pearson's Correlation	Compressed work week	Corr. Coefficient	1.00	.772
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.046
		N	166	116
	Affect. Com	Corr. Coefficient	.772	1.00
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.046	
		N	116	166

Compressed work week and Employee affective commitment

H0₂ –There is no significant relationship between compressed work week and employee affective commitment

The second test result on the hypothesis showing a $r = 0.772$ and $P = 0.046$, reveals a significant relationship between compressed work week and employee's affective commitment in the banking sector of Nigeria. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected on the basis of the evidences presented. An alternative hypothesis is stated thus:

H₂ –There is a significant relationship between compressed work week and employee affective commitment.

			Remote working	Affect. com
Pearson's Correlation	Remote working	Corr. Coefficient	1.00	.760
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.038
		N	166	116
	Affect. Com	Corr. Coefficient	.760	1.00
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.038q	
		N	116	166

Remote working and Employee affective commitment

H₀₃ –There is no significant relationship between remote working and employee commitment

The third test result on the hypothesis showing a $r = 0.760$ and $P = 0.038$, reveals a significant relationship between remote working and employee's affective commitment in the banking sector of Nigeria. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected on the basis of the evidences presented. An alternative hypothesis is stated thus:

H₃ –There is a significant relationship between remote working and employee affective commitment.

Discussion of findings

The study found out firstly that flexible resumption time has a significantly strong positive relationship with the affective commitment of employees in the banks. That is to say that if Nigerian banks institute policies that would allow their employees enjoy flexible resumption time, the employees would be happy doing their work as other aspects of their personal life are also attended to, thereby

making them develop affective commitment for their job. The findings of this study are in line with the findings of Houston (2005) who postulates that “organizations that allow flexible work policies and initiatives are able to attract and retain a higher percentage of employees than those that do not have these policies.

The study found out secondly that compressed work week has a significantly strong positive relationship with the affective commitments of employees in the banks. With a work environment that allows employees to manage their work days, By giving them more control over their work schedules. They will have a better mental health which will in turn produce in them outcomes of satisfaction and affection for their job (Jones and McKenna, 2002; Casey and Grzywacz, 2008).

The study found out thirdly that remote working has a significantly strong positive relationship with the affective commitment of employees in the banks. Beauregard & Alexander (2009), stated that employees are better able to balance competing demands if they enjoy work schedules that allow them work remotely some days of the week.

Conclusion

In the light of the findings of this study it is concluded that the flexible work environment has a strong positive relationship with the affective commitment of employees in the banks.. This is to say that the poor employee commitment level recorded in the sector is traceable to the rigid work environment experienced by these employees. The low level of commitment exhibited by these employees according to the findings of this study is due to the fact that management of banks have not put in place policies that would allow a flexible work environment of their employees to enable them have some bit of control over their work timing and schedules.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are put forward from the findings of the study.

5. Management of Banks should put in place policies and provisions like flexible work and time arrangements to enable workers take care of some personal needs, making them concentrate while at work and develop affective commitment to the organization.

6. Management of Banks should provide child care and recreational facilities to enable workers take care of some personal needs, which would in turn make them committed to the organization.
7. Management of Banks should allow employees to telework as much as possible, using the provisions of their mobile phones and the internet. This would make workers happy and give their unalloyed commitment to the organization.

References

- Adeje, S. A. (2011). *Bank recapitalization and manpower planning and control*. A paper presented at the 6th (IIRA) African Regional Congress. University of Lagos, Nigeria 2011
- Ahiauza, A. & Asawo, S. P. (2009). *Altruistic love culture and workers' commitment in the Nigerian manufacturing industry. A case study of workplace spirituality*. In Sigie S. (ed) *Repositioning African business and development for the 21st Century*. A paper Presented on the Proceedings of the 10th Annual Conference IAABD, 351-358
- Ahaizu, A. I. & Awaso, S. P. (2016). *Advanced social research methods*. Port Harcourt. Cimrat Publication.
- Akinyemi, B. O. (2014). Organizational commitment in Nigerian banks: the influence of age, tenure and education. *Journal of Management and Sustainability*; 4, (4)30-52.
- Anthonasoglo, P. P., Brissimis, S. N. & Delis, M. D. (2005). Bank-specific, industry-specific and macroeconomic determinants of bank profitability. *Bank of Greece Working Paper*. 25, (3) 85-94.
- Beauregard, L. C. & Alexander, O. (2009). Making the link between work-life balance practices and organizational performance. *Human Resource Management Review*. 9 (22), 230-251
- Beauregard, T.A. & Henry, L.C. (2009). 'Making the link between work-life balance practices and organizational performance', *Human Resource Management Review*, 19 (1), 9-22.

-
- Casey, P. R. & Grzywacz, J. G. (2008). 'Employee health and well- being: the role of flexibility and work–family balance', *The Psychologist- Manager Journal*, 11(2), 31–47.
- Farimo, D. (2006). Consolidation: union flays sack of bank workers. *The Guardian Newspaper*, April 18th, p51
- Gambles, R., Lewis, S. & Rapoport, R. (2006). *Work–Personal Life Harmonisation*, Chichester, UK: Wiley.
- Houston, D. (ed.) (2005), *Work–life balance in the twenty- first century*. Basingstoke, UK/ New York: Palgrave.
- Janice J. (2004). Flexible working: changing the manager's role. *Management Decision*, 42(6), 721-725.
- Jones, W. M. & McKenna, J. (2002), 'Women and work–home conflict: a dual paradigm approach', *Health Education*, 102(5), 249–59.
- Kirfi, M. W. & Abubakar, A. B. (2014). Job satisfaction of employees in Nigerian banks: A Study of Access Bank Plc, Sokoto, Nigeria (2014)
- Kossek, E. E., Lewis, S. & Hammer, L. B. (2010). 'Work–life initiatives and organizational change: overcoming mixed messages to move from the margin to the mainstream', *Human Relations*, 63(2), 3–19.
- Meyer, J. P. & Allen, N. J. (1991). A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human Resources Management Review*, 1, 61-89
- Meyer, J. P. & Allen, N. J. (1997). *Commitment in the work place: theory, research and application*. Thousands Oaks. Sage.
- Mittai S. & Mittai V. (2015). Employee commitment in public and private banks in india. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 10 (11), 2015
- Nwankwo, G. O. (1980). *The Nigerian Financial System*. Macmillian Press, London
- Ojo, I. S., Salau, O. P., Falola, H. O. (2011). *Work-Life Balance Practices in Nigeria: A Comparison of Three Sectors*.
[file:///C:/Users/Personal/Desktop/Worklife%20balance/167%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Personal/Desktop/Worklife%20balance/167%20(1).pdf)
-

-
-
- Okafor, E. E. (2009). Post consolidation challenges and strategies for managing employees' resistance to change in the banking sector in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 19 (2), 129-139
- Oke, B. A. (1994). Regulations of banks and other financial institutions with special reference to the regulation of discount houses in Nigeria, Central Bank of Nigeria. *Economic and Financial Review*, 29(10),16-24
- Okpara, J. O. (2002). The impact of salary differential on managerial job satisfaction: a study of the gender gap and it's implication for management education and practice in a developing economy. *The Journal of Business in Developing Nations*, 2(5),65-9