

Teleworks: A Reality Among Lecturers in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Information communication technology-based practices have given rise to flexible work arrangements, such as flexitime and telecommuting, which increase the amount of autonomy that employees have in their work. The increase in the use of ICTs and technological improvements enabled the development of telework. The study x-rayed the effect of telework on the performance of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Descriptive design was adopted, and the sample of 39 respondents was drawn from the target population of 16,203. Data were analyzed using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The findings revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between home-based telework and supervision of students by university lecturers in Nigeria. Also, a positive relationship exists between occasional telework and lecture delivery by university lecturers in Nigeria. The study recommended that management of various tertiary institutions should provide their workers with necessary facilities that will aid home-based telework to increase productivity and ensure improved work quality.

KEYWORDS

Home-Based Telework, Occasional Telework, Performance, Telework

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Telework as an alternative work arrangement originally came into existence with the eruption of the oil crisis of 1970. This is precipitated by rapid advances in information and telecommunication technologies. Despite its radical and conspicuous departures from standard working conditions in the suite of flexible work practices yet it is still gaining widespread acceptance especially in the developed countries of the world. Telework is perceived as an execution of work at home with the aid of ICT gadgets such as smartphones, desktop and laptop computers, telematics technologies to achieve intended or expected results. This definition synchronizes with the perception of the International Labour Organization (2017) as it conceptualizes telework as the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs), for work that is done outside the employer's work environment.

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Information technology has become an integral part of the office environment, and the physical location of a working place has been gradually losing its importance at present.

As telework is gaining wider acceptance in response to technology advancement, changes in the economy, shifting views of societal roles, and lately, the physical and social distancing regulatory order to curb the spread of covid-19 pandemic; it seems unavoidable that institutions of higher learning will be faced with the need to adopt telework as an integral part of their system. It is explicitly clear that knowledge and information workers are the prime candidates for teleworking or telecommuting. Given this, telework has helped knowledge workers like lecturers in tertiary institutions and myriads organizations to work remotely from anywhere in the world be it at home, an offsite office, tree shades, or from multiple locations as the case may be. This implies that telework enables individuals to work from anywhere, anytime through information communication technologies (ICT) in the opinions of (Garett & Danziger, 2006).

Telework is regarded as one of those best practices that accord employees the leverage of flexible options for enhanced work-life balance. Since distance education has emerged as an important form of education in the last few decades. In recent years, the offering of online courses and programmes has become increasingly popular not only in distance education institutions but also in traditional universities as well (Wheeler, 2002). Even the developing countries like Nigeria embarked on online teaching/lecturing owing to the unprecedented eruption of the COVID-19 Pandemic that ravaged and crippled our economy. In reality, the COVID-19 pandemic injected fears, worries, and anxieties among individuals that triggered the online classes especially in Nigeria in particular and the whole world at large. COVID-19 is conceived as a novel coronavirus with an outbreak of unusual viral pneumonia in Wuhan, China. As a result, this pandemic, interest in telework or teleworking has grown among lecturers, workers, employers, employees, transportation planners, communities, the telecommunications industry, and others (Handy and Mokhtarian, 1996). Traditional management has also encouraged the transition from visible supervision to performance-based management that concentrates more on quality and punctuality, not on a physical presence (Arnold 2006).

Moreover, keeping teleworkers connected is one of the major challenges confronting management. Research has shown that multiple roles are likely to cause conflict, thus increasing stress rather than lowering stress (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Gurstein, 1995). Intrusions from family, neighbours, and friends were reported as major problems with working at home (Gurstein, 1995), thus lowering satisfaction with telecommuting. It has also been demonstrated that home-based telework was a limited practice in terms of use, essentially practiced by a few intellectual professions characterized by a considerable amount of job autonomy and with limited potential for development. Having children less than six years old, over time, and work time had a positive impact on both working at home and on working at home intensively, that is, the home/family factors. Examples of the negative effects on employees are limited social interaction and isolation, which can lower productivity and even damage their health, network palaver especially in a developing country like Nigeria. Recently, Marissa Meyer, CEO of Yahoo, banned working from home and received a backlash from workers and professionals. The move was described as a step backward that counters studies of increased productivity, retention, and job satisfaction and could demoralize the Yahoo workers (Cohan, 2013; Gaudreau, 2013). Against these backdrops, what is the effect of home-based telework on lecturers' supervision in tertiary institutions in Nigeria?

1.1 Objective of the Study

The x-rayed the effect of teleworks on the performance of lecturers in tertiary institutions as a broad objective but specifically seeks to ascertain the relationship between home-based telework and supervision of students by tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

1.2 Hypothesis

The hypothesis was formulated for the study thus:

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