

## Flexibility Work Arrangements and Employee Normative Commitment in Selected General Hospitals in Delta State, Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

*This study examined flexible working arrangements and employee normative commitment in selected hospitals in Delta State. Specifically, to access the influence of flexi-time, job-sharing and telecommuting on employee normative commitment. A cross-sectional research design and simple random sampling technique was adopted. A questionnaire was employed as the research instrument for the study with 173 respondents deemed usable. The study was anchored on border theory and data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Correlation and multiple regression analysis were employed to analysed the study hypotheses. The results showed that flexi-time and telecommuting significantly influence employee normative commitment while sharing did not significantly influence employee normative commitment. The study concludes that flexi-time, job-sharing and telecommuting jointly significantly influenced employee normative commitment. Therefore, the study recommends among others that there should be well detailed policies that will guide both the hospital management and their employees on flexible working arrangements.*

**Keywords:** Flexi-time, job-sharing, telecommuting, normative commitment

**JEL Classification:** M1, M12, M54, Z22

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Transformation family composition, rapid technological advancement, greater number of female employees, growing reluctance on long working hours and new working practices are changing the nature of many jobs in both public and private sectors. Work and family conflict may “produce anxiety, fatigue and other psychological impacts that could have a negative effect on both work and family domains. Often, organisation’s culture and workplace practices dominate an employee needs, but due course of time, it leads to low performance, commitment and productivity” (Dev & Manc-Ray, 2017:29). The nature of employment has changed, increasing the emphasis on team-work, adaptability and flexibility. Posserriede, 2014 cited in Anekwe (2019:1) pointed out that “employees preferred flexibility in working time and location in order to suit their preferred, more individualized life-styles and to be able to better combine paid work with other life activities”. Organisations that identify plan and implement flexible working policies that are receptive to the changing nature of employment would reap increased productivity, high levels of staff retention, increased employee morale, reduce absenteeism, increased customer service and increased employee commitment (Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007).

Flexible working arrangements have been proclaimed by scholars such as Kossek and Michel (2011); Maduda, Poelmans, Allen and Spector (2012); Conradie and De-Klerk (2019); Austine-Egole, Ihesiohanma and Nwokorie (2020) as a way for organisations to reduce expenses, be more attractive to employees and cope with variations in employees’ demands. According to Kinlzic and Maric (2019:99) flexible work arrangements are “human resource management practices designed by employers to allow employees have more

scheduling freedom to enable them perform the obligations required of their positions, with the aim of achieving increased flexibility for organisations, better work-life balance and improved organisational performance and commitment". To buttress the foregoing viewpoint, Berkery, Morley, Tiernan, Purtill and Perry (2017:167) asserted that "flexible work arrangements are useful for achieving the more efficient use of human resources because they provide an opportunity to allocate employees and their time depending on the nature of the work that has to be done". Kangogo and Wanambiro (2019:67) posited that "flexible work arrangements are inexpensive for employers and popular with employees may foster positive employee outcomes that could enhance commitment".

Commitment is "complex and continuous, and requires organisations to identify ways of enhancing the work-life balance of their employees" (Lawer, 1982 in Nguru & Gichuhi, 2018:388). Commitment according to Allen and Meyer, 1996 cited in Amsaluans Mengistu (2019:2) is "the psychological link between the employee and the organisation which makes the employee leaving the organisation which makes the employee leaving the organisation voluntarily less likely". Allen and Meyer (1990:7) proposed "a three-component model for organisational commitment which includes effective, continuance and normative commitment". Normative commitment is "an employee's desire to retain organisational membership due to the believe that it is morally right to be loyal and stay in the organisation" ( Wang, Indridassion & Saunders, 2010:399). Berkery, Morley, Tiernan And Peretz (2020:3) argued that " organisations offering flexible working arrangements create a positive employment relationship that address work and non-work conflict by reducing the interference of non-work responsibilities on work commitment, thus creating a benefit and incentive for employees to remain with the organisation".

Flexible working arrangements (FWAS) research has greatly advance in develop countries; however, the awareness is still a far cry in the less developed countries of which Nigeria is not an exception. Flexible working arrangements are essential for developing and enhancing normative commitment among healthcare employees. The job of healthcare employees especially doctors and nurses are undoubtedly very demanding and challenges. To buttress the foregoing viewpoint, Kangogo and Wanamiro (2019:63) affirms that hospital employees whether they are doctors, nurses and other staff, are also affected by changes in the work style, work culture, family needs and work demands and increased pressure at workplace negatively affect the work life balance, job satisfaction and organisational commitment of hospital employees". Thus, hospital management needs to take necessary steps toward developing flexible working arrangements in order to improve job satisfaction and commitment among hospital workers. Despite the favourable outcomes of flexible working arrangements and the fact that it has attained vast research publication in developed nations, much less observations are committed in assessing the effect of flexible working arrangements on employee normative commitment in selected general hospitals in Delta State. The current study sought to investigate if there is any causal link between flexible working arrangements and employee normative commitment in selected general hospitals in Delta State, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Many studies have been conducted on flexible working arrangements across the globe especially in the developed countries but the reverse is the case in developing economies like Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana etc, where little is known about flexible working arrangements practices both in cultural and structural forms and of course an obvious paucity of empirical studies in this area. This trend creates a research gap which this study tends to fill. Several

researchers have pointed out that the effect of flexible working arrangements on employees' behaviours and attitudes is still unclear and have called for more in-depth research studies especially in less developed countries (Conradie & De-Klerk, 2019). Adonis and Kabanda (2019:4) posited that "the reasons for a lack of adoption of flexible working arrangements in many Africa countries could be attributed to lack of information technology infrastructure" and "African culture" (Peretz, Fried & Levi, 2018:188). Work and family are two sides of the same coin. Increasing day to day work pressures, meeting of target and longer working hours that are demanded from the hospital employees always leads to lower commitment, ill health, low morale and performance and employees' family discords.

This supported the assertions of Choo, Desa and Asaari (2016:22) who posited that "for many employees, juggling work and family responsibilities have become a common experience in their busy daily lives. Although, engaging in both work and family roles could bring positive effects, if employees are unable to achieve balance between the responsibilities associated with both roles, then potential work-family conflict would increase". Difficulties in striking a balance between work and family responsibilities may lead to poor employee normative commitment. To buttress this viewpoint, Nwekpa, Offor and Ezezue (2020:2) asserted that "under flexible working conditions, employees tend to control how they work in order to mitigate the effects of work stress and manage the demands of work and family matters which were strongly related to higher levels of organisational commitment". Arising from the foregoing, this current study is aimed at bridging the gap in knowledge about the causal link between flexible working arrangements and employee normative commitment and this could be of utmost importance to the hospital management, academic community, the government and the society at large.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Flexible Working Arrangements

Workplace flexibility is "the ability of employers to effect changes on where, when and the aggregate period employees can spend or engage in performing work-related tasks" (Choo *et al.*, 2016:24). According to Austin-Egole *et al.* (2020:51), "flexible, non-standard or alternative work arrangements are basically options that allow an employee to work outside the traditional confines of a standard organisation of work with respect to such different modalities, distribution of working time and place of work". Grzywacz, Carlson and Shulkin cited in Anekwe (2019:2) defined flexible working arrangements as "a practice in organisations where employees are able to choose when to work and where they work from so long as they fulfill their working obligations in doing so". Rau and Hyland (2012:117) argued that flexible working arrangement is "an organisational initiative to improve employees' flexibility all the times and provide conducive work environment where tasks can be achieved through different policies and procedures put in place to minimised the number of hours worked". Pruchno, Litchfield and Fried (2017:605) pointed out that flexible work arrangement is "a win-win situation for both the organisation and the employees in which the employees are allowed to control their time of work within the time frame". Anekwe (2019:2) observed that "flexible working arrangements enable employees to manage their work and family responsibilities harmoniously". In addition, Jerry (2014:23) argued that "the introduction of flexible working arrangements in the workplace was influenced by changes in family needs, social, technical and economic factors that lead to work-life imbalance".

In the context of this study, flexible working arrangements are human resource management practices designed to enable an employee to be effective in both work and non-work domains. According to Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2019:22) there are three main categories of

flexible working arrangements discussed in literature such as flexibility in scheduling of hours, flexibility in length of the work and flexibility in location. Similarly, Omondu and Obonyo (2018:2073) argued that “flexi-time, job-sharing and teleworking are the three major categories of flexible working arrangements that researchers focus on in the last two decades”. Also, Russell, O’connel and McGinnity (2017) argue that flexible working arrangements are made up of flexi-time, job-sharing and telecommunication. However, there are other types of flexible working arrangements such as part-time, term working, contracts work, compressed work week etc, but the current study only focus on flexi-time, job-sharing and teleworking with respect to employee normative commitment.

### **Flexi-Time**

Flexi-time also referred to as flexible working hours was “ first introduced in Germany in 1967 and was initially seen as a means of relieving transit and commute time problems” (Pierce & Newstrom, 1980 cited in Berkery *et al.*, 2020:2). Flexi-time “quickly spread across Western and Northern Europe and the United States of America at a slower pace” (Kossek & Mitchel, 2011:540). Nwekpa et al (2020:2) pointed out that “in 1970s, the use of flexi-time in attraction and retention of core employees gained wider acceptance in Africa as most manufacturing firms used it as operational strategy in enhancing employees’ work commitment. In Nigeria, it was first used in coal mining in Enugu and other parts of southern Nigeria where mineral resources were earlier discovered”. However, concerns have been raised over the years with respect to the paucity of studies exploring the relationship between flexi-time and organisational outcomes. Moreover, Berkery *et al.* (2020: 2) noted that flexi-time “gained traction as a way to attract women with family responsibilities into the workforce, allowing them to balance their work and personal lives. Flex-time is a useful tool to attract employees, such as those with caring responsibilities and those wishing to work outside the confines of the traditional working day, employees are however most-likely to implement flexi-time when the perceived benefits outweigh the costs of introducing such practices”. The need for flexi-time arises from the fact that it allows employees to balance work activities and other personal or family responsibilities. This supports the assertions of Berlin and Kerl (2017:15) who posited that “flexi-time allowed employees to attend to their family issues and perform their family issues and perform their jobs effectively within the allotted time frame.

Flexi-time according to Barney and Elias (2010:488) refers to “a policy in which the traditional fixed times that employees start and finish their workday is replaced by a framework within the employees and allowed some freedom to choose their starting and finishing times. Similarly, Anekwe (2019:2) sees flexi-time as “a process that allows an employee to negotiate the time to commence his/her work daily in as much appreciable period of work is achieved. Kossek and Distelber, 2009 in Austine-Egole *et al.* (2020:51) argued that “flexi-time is notably more applicable to professional and higher-level employees than lower-level employees and even employees in service and manufacturing hobs seem to have less access to it than jobs in other industries”. However, this cannot be said for less developed economies like Nigeria where flexi-time is less applicable in Nigerian hospitals.

Pierce and Gardner, 2009 cited in Anekwe (2018:2) revealed that “flexi-time generally lead to reduction in absenteeism of staff, increase the level of job satisfaction, high performance and organisational productivity”. Thus, flexi-time goes a long way in enhancing employee’s retention, reducing absenteeism, reducing turnover intention, increasing employees’ commitment and performance. Downes and Koekemoer (2011:1) argued also that “flexi-time benefits vary from work-life balance to employee loyalty and commitment”. Kottey and Sharma (2016:2773) highlighted two main types of flexible working

arrangements: (i) the employee-driven practice which enables employees to manage their work-life balance by reducing work-life conflict (e.g, paid parental leave, flexible leave arrangement, choice of rosters and shifts, variable year employment) and (ii) The employer-driven practice which allows organisations to adjust costs of employment in line with production volume or to secure a more competitive and motivated workforce (e.g, shift-work, weekend work, overtime, annual hours count and fixed term contracts).

### **Job-Sharing**

Job-sharing is “a new and innovative approach to flexible work arrangement which enables organisation to assign two or more employees to collectively or jointly perform some specific works. Organisations adopt job-sharing especially where opportunities for part-time schedule provisions or other flexible schedule provisions or other flexible schedules are in short supply” (Brainine, 2014:137). According to Kottey and Sharma (2016:2758), job-sharing is “basically splitting work between employees in such a way their joint weekly work hours equals the standard week working hours of one employee”. Similarly, Anekwe (2019:3) sees job-sharing as “an arrangement that allows two or more employees to engage in a full time work, whereby they shared the responsibilities between themselves.

Job-sharing allows more balanced life in terms of giving time to family, it gives leverages in taking days off when any type of emergency occurs and it helps to enhance team skills as well as leadership skills”. Nwekpa *et al.* (2020:5) pointed out that job-sharing “provides employees more time for other obligations such as personal and family commitments”. Thus, job-sharing provides employee with the ability to keep their job on track while allowing more time for personal responsibilities and other family activities.

### **Telecommuting**

Telecommuting also known as teleworking or home-based work is “a flexible work arrangement that permits employees to work in varied locations, typically using information and communication technologies. It avails employees the opportunities to engage in regular tele-interactions with work colleagues, while reducing both the commuting time and the need to acquire urban office space” (Perez, Sanchez & De-Luis, 2003:734). Telecommuting is a flexible work arrangement that allows an employee to work from home or places such as cyber cafes, on a plane, in a train or car whilst traveling, in a restaurant or park. Telecommuting allows employees to work from different locations other than their normal organisational physical environment or workplaces. Klindzic and Maric (2019:100) argued that telecommuting “saves travel time and enables employees to have regular interactions with workmates, leading to higher productivity”.

In addition, World Economic Forum (2020:4) affirmed that “teleworking can result in increase job satisfaction, decreased turnover intentions, a greater sense of autonomy and psychological control. Ashibekong and Ohiani (2019:5) asserted that telecommuting can be advantageous for employees by allowing them to work in a less stressful and unruly environment, help employees organized their workday around their personal and family needs and helps to reduce work-related expenses”. Tele-working has been slow to catch on, but organisations in Nigeria that have tried it report favourable results as well as accommodate the needs of employees with family responsibilities.

### **Normative Commitment**

Employee commitment is “a multidimensional concept based on attitude, behaviour, normative and calculative notion. It is employees’ involvement and identification with their organisation” (Nagpal, 2022:77). Commitment is “a state in which employees are physically linked to work place and able to offer their ideas, attention and dedication to its success” (Jameel, 2021:86). Commitment can also “demonstrate the employees’ contentment and satisfaction towards their current employment situation” (Jakobsson, 2018 in Anekwe, 2019:3). Meyer, Allen and Smith 1993 cited in Tosyadand Bayulhigantara (2021:62) proposed “a three component model for employee commitment that include affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. According to Setti, 2014 cited in Onu, Akinlabi and Adegbola (2018:5), defined normative commitment as “obligatory commitment to the organisation. This commitment stems from and employee’s moral obligation to stay with the organisation regardless of the benefit he or she might receive by leaving the organisation”. Similarly, Kangogo and Wanambiro (2019:69) sees normative commitment as “the employees’ feeling of obligation towards their organisation. That is the value of loyalty shown by employees to the organisation”.

Muhammad, Afridi, Ali Shah and Alasan (2021:29) conceptualized normative commitment as “an employee sense of obligation to remain in the organisation. If employee believes that remaining a member of the organisation is morally and legally correct, he or she is more likely to stay with the organisation”. Oh and Sawang (2021:2) posited that “normative commitment antecedents include the exchange between leader and member (leader-member exchange), the appraisal process in favour of employees, which satisfies their needs and provides the basis for self-esteem, emotional support and the need for affiliation”. Moreover, Bhatti, Farhan, Ahmad and Sharif (2019:314) asserted that “the determinants of normative commitment include the employee induction process into the organisation socialization that arises from family background society and through employee social contracts”. Normative commitment “arises from the individual’s feelings of obligation to the organisation, hence, it determines how much an employee’s values and beliefs concur with the organisation’s core values” (Manion, 2004 in Jakada, Jakada, Bambale, Hussein, Kurawa & Rabiou, 2019:230).

Normative commitment according to Jameel (2022:89) “reduces employee’s intention to leave the organisation, promotes organisational citizenship behaviour, and improves employee job performance, decreases employee turnover and absenteeism. Employees that identify with the organisation or have sense of belonging and positively commit to the organisation will outperform those with low levels of normative commitment”. Lauhenapessy and Lindawati (2022:555) reported that “normative commitment significant impact on employee performance. By improving employee performance, improvement in the overall organisational performance will occur”.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The concepts of flexible work arrangement and employee normative commitment are social issues which have gained attention of many scholars and have thus propounded several theories. The theories of flexible working arrangement and employee commitment are divergent and have different intervention approaches. However, border theory is the theoretical foundation on which the current study is hinged. Border theory was developed by Clark (2000); the theory is “a new approach to work-life balance issues and addresses the issue of ‘crossing borders’ between domains of life, especially the domains of work and home” (Rincy & Panchanatham, 2014:14). According to Clark (2000:748), border theory “attempts to explain the complex interaction between border-crossers and their work and

family lives to predict when conflict will occur and give a framework for attaining balance. Borders can be physical (e.g., Walls, define where domain-relevant behaviour should take place), temporal (e.g., work hours, define when work is done/from when family responsibilities can be pursued), or psychological (rules created by individuals that dictate when thinking patterns, behaviour patterns and emotions are appropriate for one domain but not the other). There are also three attributes that characterize the borders such as permeability (the degree to which elements from other domains may enter a domain), flexibility (the extent to which a border may contract or expand, depending on the demands of one domain or the other) and blending (occurs when high degree of permeability and flexibility is present near the border; means mixing of the domains borders). These three borders attributes indicate the border strength. Strong borders are characterized by high impermeability, high inflexibility and not permitting blending (Bellavia & Frone, 2005).

Al, Hazemi and Ali (2016:16) posited that “the flexibility and permeability of the boundaries between people’s work and family lives will affect the level of integration, the ease of transitions and the level of conflict between the domains. Boundaries that are flexible and permeable facilitate integration between work and non-work domains. When domains are relatively integrated, transition is easier, but work-family conflict is more likely. Conversely, when the domains are segmented, transition is more effort fit, but work-family conflict is less likely”. The theory supports “the possibility that help to illuminate how far employees are in control of issues determining balance. It also allows for analysis of psychological and physical controls; while emphasis in the resent literature suggests that competition and technology have resulted in a more intensive and extensive work and opens up scope for social construction or cognitive distortion of boundaries to create a defensible subjective sense of balance” (Rincy & Panchanatham, 2014:15). Anekwe (2019:3) pointed out that “the theory rises from the thinking that work and family are distinct realms which influence each other and despite the fact that many facets of work and family domains are not easy to alter, it is possible for employees to find ways to bridge the gap between them and strike a favourable balance to ensure that neither of the two domains are comprised. Flexible working arrangements present one of the approaches that can be used to strike the balance between work and family domains”.

In his study, Clark (2000) suggested that the purpose of border theory is all about supporting employee performance and commitment, and working effectively both at home and work place. From the foregoing, the border theory is sacrosanct to this study because it focused on the issue at hand. It helps employees accommodate the contending issues of work and non work domains by addressing their own needs and those of their managers. A health system of permeable and flexible boundaries can better facilitate and encourage work-life balance and community-life, and family-life domains. Flexible working arrangements have not facilitate the balance between work and non-work domains due to the fact that majority organisations in Nigeria have created flexible working policies to serve their own interests and not those of employees. In order to succeed in today’s competitive business environment, Nigerian organisations need to change their values and cultures basically on the multidimensional approaches of flexi-time, job-sharing, teleworking and the likes which allows the employees, especially healthcare workers to determine when and how their job will be done with the management designated time from fir the job. The possibility of flexi-time, job-sharing and telecommuting “help employees to achieve competence that could lead to increased performance and organisational productivity (Berkery *et al.*, 2017:179) And the effect of flexible working arrangements on employee normative commitment is in line with the tenets of the border theory.

### Empirical Review

Beckery *et al.* (2020) emphasized in their study that there is “a solid link between flexi-time and organisational outcomes and also an effective flexible working arrangements would improve employee commitment, productivity, innovation and reduce absenteeism, which ultimately influences performance and leads to financial outcomes such as increase profits”. Berkery *et al.*, (2017:179) argued in their study that “employees perceive employers who offer flexible working arrangements as attentive to their well-being and in turn they gain identification and motivation to be more committed to their employers, which could eventually lead to reduced levels of turnover, absenteeism and improved retention”. Choo *et al.*, (2016:32) pointed out in their study that “the availability of flexible working options are more in demand because there are more dual-earner couples, women and single-parent families as well as those who have geriatric care responsibilities in the workplace”. Kangogo and Wanambiro (2018) in their study on the influence of flexible working schedules on organisational commitment of employees in hospitals in Nakuru town, Kenya found that flexible working schedules have a weak positive significant relationship organisational commitment. Choo *et al.* (2016) studied the relationship between flexible working arrangement and organisational commitment as well as work-family conflict. Their findings revealed that flexible working arrangement is positively related to affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment.

Okemwa (2016) study on the relationship between flexible work arrangement and commitment of nurses in public hospitals in Kenya, found out that there is significant positive relationship between flexible working arrangements and commitment of nurses. Onu *et al.*, (2018) found out in their study data analysis results that there is an impactful link between flexible working arrangement and normative commitment of employees in selected deposit money banks in Ogun State, Nigeria. Their study had significant effect on normative commitment. A study carried by Essien and Edwinah (2017) revealed that the implementation of flexible working arrangements positively impacts on organisational commitment and the outcomes shows that flexible work schedules impacts on employee affective, continuance and normative commitment in the Nigeria baking industry. Also, Choo *et al.*, (2016) revealed that flexible working arrangement significantly influence on normative commitment of employees in a manufacturing company in Panang, Malaysia. Anekwe (2019:2) posited that flexible working arrangement is “significant in enhancing employees’ commitment (affective, continuance normative), quality service delivery and client satisfaction in the banks”. Nwekpa *et al.* (2020:6) pointed out that “when responsibilities are shared among workers, it brings about cross-fertilization of ideas from employees who may have cognate experience on the work, thereby enhancing their commitment”.

Mungania, Waiganjo and Kihow (2016:168) argued that flexible working arrangements is “a critical component of a result driven workplace and they influenced employee performance, job satisfaction, enhanced staff morale, facilitate employee effectiveness on off the job, enhanced customer satisfaction and enhanced employee rate of commitment”. Eletherins, 2018 cited in Anekwe (2019:4) is of the opinion that “age, education, wage, quality of relations between managers and employees, years of experience, market share and competitive edge and significant factors and are positively associated with the propensity of the implementation of flexible employment arrangements”. Therefore, it can be argued from the foregoing that flexible working arrangements have blurred the boundary between work and non-work, thus enhancing performance and engagement through dedication and



normative commitment. From the foregoing literature review, the following hypotheses were formulated for this study:

H<sub>1</sub> Flexi-time has significant influence on employee normative commitment in selected general hospitals in Delta State, Nigeria.

H<sub>2</sub> Job-sharing has significant effect on employee normative commitment in selected general hospitals in Delta State, Nigeria.

H<sub>3</sub>: Telecommuting has significant influence on employee normative commitment in selected general hospitals in Delta State, Nigeria.

## METHODS

This study adopted cross-sectional research design. According to Breakwell, Hammond and Fife-Schaw (1995:27), cross-sectional research design “enables the researcher to observe two or more variables and further describes the correlation between the variables”. 386 healthcare employees of central hospital Ughelli (150), Eku general hospital (173) and Abraka general hospital (63) in Delta State constituted the population for this study. Employing Toro Yamane (1967) sampling technique

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where: n = sample size

N = 386

e = error unit

1 = constant

A sample size of 196 was generated from the formula as shown below

$$n = \frac{386}{1 + 386(0.0025)}$$

$$n = 196\text{App}$$

The choice of Yamane’s (1967) sampling technique as the sample size determination for this study was supported by Sekaram (2013:27) who asserted that “the Yamane’s sampling technique is widely used in the social and management sciences as a reliable technique for determining sampling adequacy from targeted population”. For the purposed this study, a self- administered structure questionnaire was employed to collect data from the healthcare employees of the selected hospitals using simple random sampling technique was supported by Jameel (2022:90) who posited that “simple random sampling strategy reduce the likelihood of uneven participation and a representative sample is crucial in deriving conclusions from the outcomes of an investigation since it is an unbiased random selection”. The first part of the questionnaire was for demographic information of the respondents and the second part consisted of 20 research questions distributed among four variables. All the 20 items were adopted from previous studies and has been modified to better address the new

respondents in a different environment. Flexi-time (FT) measured 5 items, job-sharing (TS) measured 5 items was adopted from Abioro, Oladejo and Ashogbon (2018) and normative commitment (NC) measured by 5 items adapted from Meyer and Allen (1997). All the scales for these variables were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale that ranged from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5).

Descriptive and inferential statistical were used to analysed collected data with the aid of package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 23. The descriptive statistics include frequency percentage and cumulative percentage used to analysed demographic variables. Validity and reliability as well as the hypotheses were tested using Smart-PLS, Fornell-Larcker criterion. Correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to analysed the hypotheses. Out of the 196 questionnaire administered, only 173 were retrieved and analysed, given us a response rate of 88%. Content and construct validity was used to validate the instrument while factors loading (FL), composite reliability (CR) Crombach's alpha (CA) Average Variance Extract (ACE) criterion was used to test the reliability and also the validity instrument as shown below.

**Table 1: Reliability Matrix**

Constructs	Items	FL	CR	CA	AVE
	FT1	0.847			
	FT2	0.800			
Flexi-Time	FT3	0.869	0.947	0.924	0.744
	FT4	0.913			
	FT5	0.884			
	JS1	0.853			
	JS2	0.795			
Job-Sharing	JS3	0.808	0.921	0.913	0.717
	JSS4	0.789			
	JSS5	0.796			
	TC1	0.823			
	TC2	0.80			
Telecommuting	TC3	0.754	0.953	0.934	0.740
	TC4	0.796			

	TC5	0.917			
	NC1	0.860			
	NC2	0.905			
Normative	NC3	0.879	0.936	0.919	0.751
Commitment	NC4	0.791			
	NCS	0.871			

**Source:** SPSS version 23.0 Software, 2020

Table 1 shows that all the loading items are above 0.70. Thus, all the items loadings are at an acceptable level. Additionally, the reliability of constructs was accessed by CR and CA with cut-off level for both of the indicators equal to or above 0.70. All the four constructs were above the standard threshold in line with Hair, Hult, Ringle and Sarstedt (2017)

**Table 2: Fornell – Larcker Criterion Validity**

Construct	FT	JS	TC	NC
FT	0.886			
JS	0.783	0.873		
TC	0.662	0.590	0.860	
NC	0.567	0.489	0.426	0.855

**Source:** SPSS version 23 software, 2022

Table 2 shows Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion also known as discriminant validity that reveals the level of differentiating among all items for each construct compared to other items constructs. However, the discriminant validity measured by the four constructs showed that each construct is AVE correlated with itself higher than other construct as depicted in Table 2 above with FT square root of AVE = 0.886 higher than other constructs, JS = 0.783, TC = 0.662 and NC = 0.567 and similar with other constructs. Thus, the constructs of flexible working arrangements and normative commitment for this study showed high reliability and internal consistency. Hence, the research instrument for this study is highly valid and reliable.

## RESULTS

**Table 3: Respondents Demographic Results**

Items	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Sex			
Male	74	42.8	42.8
Female	99	57.2	100
Total	173	100	
Age range			
Below 30 years	43	24.9	24.9
31-40 years	51	29.5	54.4
41-50years	59	34.1	88.5
Above 50 years	20	11.5	100
Total	173	100	
Marital Status			
Single	58	33.5	33.5
Married	109	63.0	96.5
Divorced	6	3.5	100
Total	173	100	
Qualification			
Diploma	31	17.9	17.9
Undergraduate Degree	74	42.8	60.7
Postgraduate Degree	57	32.9	93.6
Professional Degree	11	6.4	100
Total	173	100	
Experience			

1-5 years	35	20.2	20.2
6-10 years	46	26.6	46.8
11-15 years	40	23.1	69.9
16-20 years	36	20.8	90.7
Above 20 years	16	9.3	100
	173	100	

**Source:** Field Survey, 2022

From Table 3, 99 of the respondents representing 57.2% one female while 74(42.8%) are male. This implies that there were more female than male employees in the sample size. This indicated that the female are more interested in the issues that relates to flexible working arrangements in the workplace. In respect of age range, 43% of the respondents representing 24.9% are aged below 30years, 57 of them representing 29.5% are 31-40 years, 59 of them representing 34.1% are 41-50 years while 20 (11.5%) are above 50 years. This implies that majority of the respondents are 41-50 years of aged, indicated that the respondents are matured enough to be able to understand how flexible working arrangements such as flexi-time, job-sharing and tele-working can influence employees' normative commitment in the workplace. In respect to their marital status, 58(33.5%) were single, while 109 (63.0%) were married and 6(3.5%) were divorced. This shows that most of the respondents were married. This indicated that the employees could exhibit stable behaviour and encourage their commitment to the attainment of organisational set goals and objectives.

With respect to qualification, 31(17.9%) had diploma degree, 74(42.8%) had undergraduate degree, 57(32.9%) had postgraduate degree and 11 (6.4%) has professional degree such ACAN, NIM, ACCA, CIPA, CIPD, etc. this implies that most of the respondents had a first degree. This could enhance their understanding of flexible working arrangements and their effects on employees' normative commitment. With respect to experience, 35(20.2%) had 1-5 years experience, 46(26.6%) had 6-10 years experience, 40(23.1%) had 11-15 years experience, 36(20.8%) had 16-20 years experience while 16(9.3%) had above 20 years experience. This implies that majority of the respondents had 6-10 years working experience. This further indicated that a substantial number of the employees had spent a reasonable number of years in the hospital to be able to understand the issues relating to work-life balance, work-life conflict, flexible working options and how they impact upon employees' normative commitment in the workplace.

**Table 4 Correlation Matrix**

S/N	Variables	Mean	S.D	1	2	3	4
1	FT	4.73	0.591	1			
2	JS	4.18	0.703	0.344*	1		

3	TC	3.30	0.664	0.370*	0.308**	1	
4	NC	34.7	0.837	0.335**	0.410**	0.362	1

\*\* P< 01, \* P< .05

**Key:** FT: Flexi-time, JS: Job-sharing, TC: Telecommuting and NC: Normative Commitment

In table 4, the relationship between flexible working arrangements (as measured by flexi-time, job-sharing and tele-commuting) and normative commitment was assessed using the Pearson product Moment Correlation coefficient. Preliminary analysis was performed to measure non violation of the assumptions of linearity, normative and homoscedasticity. The result shows significant positive correlation between flexi-time and normative commitment ( $r = 0.335$ ,  $n = 173$ ). This implies that as flexi-time increases, normative commitment of employee increases. The result also shows that job-sharing had a significant positive correlation with employee normative commitment ( $r = 0.410$ ,  $n = 173$ ). More so, the result shows that telecommuting had significant positive correlation with employee normative commitment ( $r = 0.362$ ,  $n = 173$ ). Since correlation does not imply causation, a multiple regression analysis was done to verify the joint and individual effect of flexi-time, job-sharing and telecommuting on employee normative commitment as depicted in Table 5 below.

**Table 5: Multiple Regression Outcomes 15**

Hypotheses	Mean	SD	Beta	T	Sig.	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P
FT → NC		0.792	0.345	3.357	0.006				
	0.430								
JS → NC		0.815	0.015	0.692	0.000	0.513	0.225	21.314	<.05
	0.372								
TC → NC		0.738	0.423	6.123	0.00				
	0.454								

\*\* FT: Flexi-time, JS: Job-sharing, TC: Telecommuting, NC: Normative Commitment

The regression analysis shows that the R for the model is 0.513, while the  $R^2 = 0.22$  indicating that 22.5% variation in the employee normative commitment was caused by the independent variables (flexi-time, job-sharing and telecommuting). Moreover, a diagnostic test was conducted and the result of the variance inflation factor (VIF) ranged from 1.115 to 1.923 which was still within the standard threshold of 10. Thus, multicollinearity was not an issue as it shows the absence of autocorrelation in the model. The overall model is significant ( $F = 21.314$ ),  $p < .05$ ). In terms of the influence of each independent variable on employee normative commitment, the model showed that flexi-time significantly exert positive influence on the employee normative commitment ( $\beta = 0.345$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Therefore, hypothesis one was accepted. Job-sharing had no significant influence on employee normative ( $\beta = 0.0$ ,  $p < .05$ ), therefore, hypothesis two was rejected. Telecommuting had significant positive influence on the employee normative

commitment ( $\beta = 0.423$ ,  $p < .05$ ), therefore, hypothesis three was accepted. However, only flexi-time and telecommuting make a unique statistical contribution to the model.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study has been achieved after the data analysis and the results discussed above. Results revealed more female employees than male employees in the study, majority of the employees were married, most of the employees had first degree (undergraduate degree), majority of the employees were between the ages of 41-50 years and most had 6-10 years working experience which spanned through the selected hospitals in Delta State. The results also revealed strong and positive significant relationship between flexible working arrangements (flexi-time, job-sharing and telecommuting) and employee normative commitment in selected hospitals in Delta State, Nigeria. This finding was in line with Choo *et al.* (2006) who found that flexible working arrangements was positively and significantly related to employee normative commitment. The finding was also corroborated with Kangogo and Wanambiro (2019) who found that flexible working arrangements have positive and significant relationship with organisational commitment of employees.

There were three hypotheses formulated for this study and the result of hypothesis one was supported by the findings of Nwekpa *et al.* (2020) which to them, improving work schedule flexibility enhance employees' commitment. Kangogo and Wanambiro (2019) collaborating with this finding argued that flexi-time significantly influence the organisational commitment of employee in Nakuru town, Kenya. For this reason, placing emphasis on what can help enhance employees' normative commitment in Nigeria hospitals is imperative especially now that many organisation's operations were disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, in hypothesis two, the result revealed that job-sharing had no significant influence on employee normative commitment. This finding is not in tandem with Essien and Edwinah (2017) who found that job-sharing positively impacts employee affective, continuance and normative commitment. Kotey and Sharma (2016:2766) argued that "job-sharing enhanced employees' skills, allowed more time for family responsibilities and social activities, but on the long-run it reduced financial benefits and increased job insecurity".

Finally, the result showed that telecommuting had significant influence on employee normative commitment. The finding corroborated Essien and Edwinah (2017) who found that tele-working positively and significantly influence employee normative commitment. This finding was also in line with Brainine (2014) who posited that telecommuting remains fundamental to employee normative commitment. Also, in supporting the findings of this study, Atiku, Jeremiah and Boateng (2020:3) argued that "teleworking and flexi-time options are essential in extending the productive hours of employees in the digital age. One can work in the morning, afternoon, at night and diffusing into the holidays and weekends". Nwekpa *et al.* (2020:3) reported also that "employees' level of confidence is always high when working under flexi-time and tele-working schedules, as it reduces the work stress, improves employees' physical and mental balance and increases employees' commitment.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study revealed that flexible working arrangements are strong predictors for employees' normative commitment. Flexible working arrangements are essential in less developed countries of which Nigeria is not exception, because of the changes in economic circumstance changes in family composition, increasing number of female employees, technological advancement and increasing reluctance of long working hours. In today's competitive environment, management flexible working policies should emphasize long-term commitment among employees to improve the organisation's success

and effectiveness. It therefore becomes imperative to promote flexible work arrangements' policies and structures that will enhance and improve the normative commitment of hospital employees. This is because flexible working arrangements reduce work-related stress, promote work efficiency and effectiveness, improve physical and mental stability, help employees in managing the boundaries between work and family domains.

Employees who are allowed flexibly working arrangements often demonstrate full commitment to work and non-work activities. From the foregoing therefore, this study recommended that there should be well detailed policies that will guide both the hospital management and their employees on flexible working arrangements, there is need for the hospital management to encourage job-sharing with full salary so as to reduce work-related stress, increases employees' satisfaction and invariably increases employees' normative commitment and flexible working arrangements such as flexi-time, teleworking, job-sharing and compressed work week should be encourage in Nigerian hospitals to help healthcare employees in balancing their work and family domains.

### **LIMITATION**

Due to the fact that the scope of this study is restricted to three general hospitals in delta state Nigeria where it seeks to make generalization to all the hospitals in Nigeria, limitation arises because it was not representative enough and the selected participants and results of this study may not be generalized to the other general hospitals in other states or countries. It is on this background that future researchers should carry out an insightful study of this magnitude to fill the noticed gaps. Also, other hospitals should be covered where larger population will be sampled and utilized to enhance the objectivity of the research. Other limitations are low response rate and the inability to obtain a completely random sample.

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