



**INFLUENCE OF FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULE ON EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY IN LAW FIRMS IN NAKURU COUNTY**

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## INFLUENCE OF FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULE ON EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY IN LAW FIRMS IN NAKURU COUNTY

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### ABSTRACT

*The impact of employee productivity on job satisfaction within the context of law firms is a pivotal concern. In this regard, productivity assumes a paramount role as a performance metric in the legal sector. A salient challenge encountered by legal practitioners pertains to achieving a harmonious work-life balance, resonating with the demanding requisites of the profession. While a flawless equilibrium between professional commitments and personal pursuits might be elusive, there is an emergent acknowledgment among legal entities regarding the indispensability of work/life equilibrium for their workforce. This envisions a holistic alignment between occupational responsibilities and individual aspirations. Nevertheless, the practical implementation and subsequent effects of flexible work schedule initiatives in Kenyan legal practices, specifically within Nakuru County, remain an empirical gap. This study, therefore, delved into a comprehensive investigation of the repercussions of flexible work schedule on the productivity of legal professionals operating within law firms situated in Nakuru County, Kenya. The study's theoretical underpinnings were rooted in the Compensation Theory. Employing a descriptive survey research design, the study's scope encompassed the entire populace of 2000 law firms domiciled within Nakuru County. The research cohort consisted of select legal personnel comprising a partner and three tenured legal staff members. Employing systematic random sampling, a sample size of 95 respondents was derived. Data accumulation was channelled through structured questionnaires. Analytical methodologies encompass both descriptive statistics, exemplified through frequency distributions and percentages, and inferential tools, prominently the Pearson product-moment correlation and multiple linear regression analyses.*

**Key Words:** Flexible Work Schedule, Work-Life Balance, Legal Professionals

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## INTRODUCTION

Employee productivity has a strong influence on job satisfaction and productivity. Human resource policies that encourage worker involvement aim to provide opportunities for employees to have input in decisions, incentives to expend discretionary efforts and the means to acquire appropriate skills (Purnama, 2018). Among these policies, the participation scheme directly affects two aspects, namely opportunities and incentives. As a result, increased incentives to acquire skills as well as work organization and information flow. This combined effect is expected to increase the efficiency and productivity of the company.

The current definition of productivity within a law firm also leaves a lot of information unexplored. By examining only, the number of hours billed per lawyer per day or month, law firms miss the opportunity to really explore what they produce and how they produce it, in much more meaningful ways. Work-time efficiency (WTE) could be a measure of the amount of time billed as a function of the amount of time worked. For the firms, gaining a deeper understanding of how their lawyers' inputs align to the firm's outputs can help to optimize how their people work. Lawyers who work too many hours with too little to show for it can be made more productive and maybe even improve their own work-life balance. One of the areas where law firm's employees face significant productivity challenges is in their work-life.

In contrast, the situation in Asia presents noteworthy disparities, where despite waning enthusiasm, job satisfaction metrics remain conspicuously high. Notably, over 93 percent of legal practitioners throughout Asia indicate contentment with their professional roles, according to this year's survey. A significant subset, nearly half of the respondents, self-identify as remarkably satisfied. This sentiment is reflected in regions such as Hong Kong, where the work-life equilibrium within law firms garners praise, with over 90 percent expressing satisfaction. Moreover, a majority (51 percent)

perceives themselves as "extremely valued" or conversely, not valued at all. The legal culture in this context emphasizes work-life harmony, nurturing holistic growth encompassing both occupational commitments and personal pursuits.

Considering the strong inclination of the younger generation toward improved work-life balance, millennials in the Nigerian legal sector prioritize flexibility when assessing potential employers (Odutola, 2022). Consequently, organizations that emphasize remote work are likely to attract and retain this demographic more effectively. Strikingly, older employees within the 45-60 age bracket also display enthusiasm for telecommuting's flexibility. The correlation between age and the preference for remote work reveals that with increasing age, the propensity to work from home instead of the office grows.

However, in Egypt, the legal landscape's intense competitiveness and demanding nature necessitate extensive working hours for lawyers to remain competitive. Paradoxically, societal expectations place the responsibility for household and childcare duties squarely on women's shoulders, creating formidable obstacles to achieving work-life equilibrium (Adsero-Ragy et al., 2022).

A 2019 Brighter Monday Kenya white paper on how to get most from the millennial employee, found that 63 per cent of respondents say flexible working hours is a factor that motivates them the most to accomplish their tasks at work. 17 per cent of respondents say they prefer introduction of health programmes as key motivators to accomplish work compared to 8.4 per cent who prefer taking regular breaks from desk and 7.4 per cent who prefer regular fun activities.

In Kenya, majority of advocates working in law firms have an inadequate work-life balance. On average, advocates work for 9 hours 15 minutes, excluding lunch break and other breaks. The advocates were not entitled to vary the working days, and most were not allowed to vary the working hours, start times and finish times. Most advocates, however, were

entitled to take time off from work to attend to personal matters. Most advocates were also allowed to choose whether or not to work on weekends. On practices relating to the location, the study revealed that the advocates were not allowed to work from locations other than the office. With reference to WLB practices relating to flexibility of working hours, the advocates were not entitled to vary the working days, and most were not allowed to vary the working hours, start times and finish times (Njoroge, 2014).

### **Statement of the problem**

Studies show that a well-rounded employee is more productive in the workplace, as well as more dedicated to the practice and thoughtful in their work duties. Given the productivity demands of the legal profession, having work-life balance is important to the wellbeing of the employees of the firms. However, for legal staff to achieve work-life balance is still debatable. A 2018 Legal Trends Report found that 75% of lawyers frequently or always work outside of business hours, and 39% of lawyers say that those extended hours have taken a toll on their personal lives. Poor work-life balance influences the turnover and employees' productivity.

The legal profession requires lawyers to work hard to gain position to top law firms in their fields (Maangi, 2017). In most countries, the lawyers find that their needs for work/life balance are secondary. Even in the most educated and ambitious individual consistent long workdays and overwhelming workloads cause employee burnout. The effect of employee turnover is immediately felt in the world of professional services. An existing lawyer almost takes any clients with them. The effect is that the law firms will immediately lose the billable hours or time that the lawyer consistently provided (Mastri, 2017). Recruiting, onboarding, and training, combined with errors and lost productivity, can cost a firm up to \$800,000 per lost lawyer in the US while in contexts like Kenya it could cost millions of shillings. A study by Maangi (2017) on law firms in Kenya revealed that turnover affects the financial position of their organization, their organization incurs high direct cost is due to recruitment,

selection and training of fresh people, there is an indirect cost in our organization such as workload for the remaining staff and overtime expenses incurred by co-workers. Employee retention, therefore, just makes good economic sense.

However, while the pursuit of a perfect balance may prove fruitless in the legal profession, many firms are recognizing the need for a work/life balance among their attorneys and staff, which entails a healthy balance between work duties and personal goals. However, the extent to which these work life balance initiatives are being practiced in law firms in Kenya and their effect on employee wellbeing has not been documented in empirical research. Maangi and Wambalaba (2017) investigated the factors contributing to high employee turnover of lawyers in law firms in Kenya. While the study highlighted work life balance as a factor of employee turnover, it did not show whether any WLB initiatives were being used by the law firms to improve employee wellbeing. Kitali (2021) studied the influence of employee wellness programs on employee commitment at KCB Bank Kenya. The study found that implementing wellness programs broadly helps in enhancing workers' job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. The study, however, which was not carried out in a law firm focused on health and nutrition, employee support programs, mental and physical health and workplace conditions. WLB variables such as job redesign, job sharing, flexible work schedule and workplace culture were not addressed by the study. Therefore, the present study sought to establish how work life balance initiatives and employee productivity in law firms in Kenya focusing on Nakuru County.

### **Research Objectives**

The objective of the study was to establish the influence of flexible work schedule on employee productivity in law firms in Nakuru County. The study tested the following research hypothesis;

- **H<sub>0</sub>:** Flexible work schedule does not significantly influence employee productivity in law firms in Nakuru County, Kenya

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

#### Compensation Theory

The compensation theory refers to an attempt of making up for shortcomings or deficits in one role through higher involvement in another role (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). These deficiencies could be the demands or satisfactions that can be fulfilled in another role (Guest, 2002). For example, an individual is highly engaged in the work life because of some negative experiences in the non-

work life. The sense of doing something Worthwhile and gaining positive energy in non-work life is achieved through higher engagement at workplace and having time for resting. The theory instigated the third study objective to examine the asses the influence of flexible work schedule on employee productivity in law firms in Nakuru County.

#### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework depicting independent variable and dependent variable relationships was given in Figure 1 below.

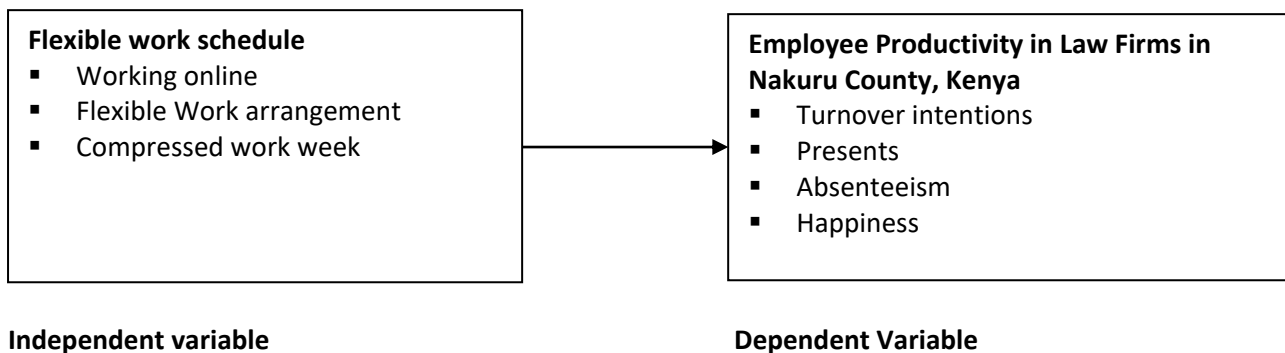


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

### Review of Variables of the Study

#### Flexible Work Schedule

Flexible work arrangements are tailored to assist individuals in harmonizing their familial and professional obligations by granting them the autonomy to determine when, how much, and where they work. An enduring form of such arrangements involves a set core working hours with adaptable start and finish times. By affording individuals greater control over their work schedules, employees can effectively address their familial commitments. Users of flexible work arrangements frequently report effective job performance, job satisfaction, improved relationships with supervisors and colleagues, and a reduced inclination to leave their employment. Organizations can reap rewards not only in terms of enhanced employee productivity but also by curbing sick leave usage, absenteeism, and tardiness.

Research underscores the advantages associated with flexible work schedules. The work flexibility

dimension, as highlighted by Galinsky and Halpern (2005), holds the potential to influence employees' decisions to seek new employers, thus correlating turnover rates with the level of organizational flexibility. Flexible scheduling has been shown to decrease employee absenteeism, thereby bolstering productivity (Kelly, Kalev, Kossek & Hammer, 2008). Evidence supports the positive impact of schedule flexibility on employee performance (Combs, Hall & Ketchen, 2006). Studies by Gariety and Shaffer (2001) indicate that flexible scheduling corresponds to increased income, fostering a mutually beneficial production-employee relationship (Shepard, Clifton & Kruse, 1996).

The availability of flexible work practices, which extends beyond users of such practices, has been linked to heightened effective commitment and diminished turnover intentions for all employees (Grover & Crooker, 1995). Organizations embracing flexible work practices observe heightened profitability and improved employee relationships with family and friends. Properly managed work-life



balance results in enhanced physical and mental well-being for employees. Existing literature underscores the positive effects of flexible work practices on both individuals and organizational productivity. Pfizer Canada, for instance, noted a 30% productivity surge in its translation department through the implementation of job sharing. In the realm of customer service, KPMG highlighted how allowing employees to take emergency leave for care responsibilities led to enhanced retention and service excellence (Ioan, 2010).

Ter Hoeven & van Zoonan (2015) reveal that autonomy serves as a mediating factor between flexible work arrangements and well-being. Talent Corp (2018) points out that employers primarily adopt flexible work arrangements to bolster employee well-being. A substantial 76% of employers attribute the application of work-life practices, particularly flexible work arrangements, to an enhanced sense of employee well-being. The positive association between flexible work arrangements and well-being, evident in the literature (Allen et al., 2013; De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Golden, 2008), underscores its significance. Gajendran et al. (2015) highlight a robust mediation of autonomy in the relationship between telecommuting (a form of flexible work arrangement) and performance. Similarly, Berkery et al. (2017) found that fulfilling employees' need for autonomy boosts job satisfaction and motivation, curbing stress and work-home conflicts, ultimately elevating overall productivity (Berkery et al., 2017).

## **Empirical Review**

### **Flexible work schedule on employee productivity**

The Eurofound and International Labour Office (2017) report examines the influence of online and mobile work (T/ICTM) on the global work landscape. The prevalence of T/ICTM is shaped not solely by technological advancements but also by existing economic structures and work cultures. The countries analyzed, including Finland, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the US, exhibit varying T/ICTM adoption rates, ranging from 2% to 40% among employees. This variation depends on factors

such as country, occupation, sector, and the frequency of engagement in this form of work. On average across the EU28, approximately 17% of employees engage in T/ICTM. Most commonly, T/ICTM is undertaken occasionally rather than regularly. While professionals and managers are more likely to participate in T/ICTM, this practice is also significant among clerical support and sales workers. Gender-wise, men tend to engage in T/ICTM more than women, though women are more involved in regular home-based online work, revealing the influence of country-specific gender roles and work-family models on T/ICTM adoption.

Wang and Walumbwa (2007) conducted a study across banks in China, Kenya, and Thailand, observing that the availability of flexible work arrangements (FWA) within these banks enhances organizational commitment and boosts productivity. However, this study's assumption of homogeneity across banks in different countries and its failure to address specific FWA needs in each country could lead to misleading conclusions due to organizational structural differences. Despite being favored by employers due to lower costs, Bloom and Van Reenen (2006) highlight that FWA don't exhibit a direct link with organizational performance. Yet, longitudinal research by Menezes and Kelliher (2011) demonstrates a positive connection between flexible working and individual performance.

The "Business case" study on flexible work arrangements by Menezes and Kelliher (2011) reveals no causality between flexible and non-flexible arrangements among workers. However, the study's focus on single occupation respondents and reliance on data from one organization limits the generalizability of its findings. Additionally, a longitudinal study by Golden (2007) in the USA and Australia shows that a significant percentage of workers lack the ability to influence their work schedules and flexibility, suggesting limitations in achieving flexible work arrangements. Menezes and Kelliher (2011) identify a mixed consensus on whether FWA correlate with employee performance. Around 31% of the margin supports a

relationship, while 69% argue against it. Home-based work is positively linked to performance due to cost reduction, whereas job-sharing has a negative impact, as employees perceive their contributions as less visible. In line with this, SBS (2011) notes that only 26% of Kenya's top-performing companies foster flexible, responsive cultures.

## **METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design:** This study was carried out using descriptive survey research design. Scult (1996) defines survey as the method used in obtaining information through responses that a sample of individuals give to questions presented.

**Target Population:** A target population is described as a group of people, events, or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, all law firms based in Nakuru County were targeted. There were 2000 law firms based in the County (LSK, 2021) with at least one partner and three legal staff on long term contracts. The legal firms formed the unit of analysis while the unit of observation were the firm managers, associates and employees. The sampling frame was derived from the list provided by the Law Society of Kenya.

**Sample Size:** The population of interest in the present study was sufficiently large to warrant the use of probability sampling methods. The main factor considered in determining sample size is the need to keep it manageable while being representative enough of the entire population under study. Thus, the study first obtained the required sample size of 95 respondents using the formula by Nassiuma (2000);

**Sampling Technique:** Systematic random sampling is ideal for the present study because it has the characteristic of providing each member of the target population an equal chance of being included

in the study while at the same time keeping the size manageable. This was used to select respondents from the study population for participation in the study (Kothari, 2004).

**Research Instruments:** The study used questionnaires as data collecting instruments. Both closed and open-ended items will be used in the questionnaire. The selection of these tools was guided by the nature of data collected, time available and the objectives of the study.

**Data Processing and analysis:** Data obtained from the questionnaires were first cleaned and edited before being coded and subjected to further analysis. The Likert scales in closed ended questions in the questionnaires were converted to numerical codes and be scored on 1–5-point scale in order of magnitude of the construct being measured, then be entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 computer program. Descriptive statistical analysis was done using frequencies and percentages to describe the basic characteristics of the data.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Descriptive Analysis**

The following section contains descriptive information that describes the current situation in the law firms in terms of flexible work schedule and productivity. The indicators to this regard include means and standard deviations. The descriptive data are recorded in tables and presented in accordance with the research objectives.

### **Flexible work schedule on employee productivity**

This subsection covers statistics on the state of flexible work schedules on employee productivity in the law firms. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics on various aspects of flexible work schedules in the law firms.

**Table 1: Flexible work schedule on employee productivity**

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Our firm offers flexibility to the employees on when to start the day and when to end the day	172	1.00	5.00	3.3488	1.17744
Our firm offers flexibility on the number of days an employee can work if the hours are billed as required	172	1.00	5.00	4.1047	.96765
Our firm allows longer working day to get a day off per week if so desired	172	1.00	5.00	4.2849	.82021
As an employee I can adjust my daily or weekly working hours in a way that best fit my preferences	172	1.00	5.00	4.0349	1.12336
We are allowed to share information freely at work	172	1.00	5.00	4.1686	.78028
We are allowed to work online in our firm	172	1.00	5.00	3.1860	.87875
Flexible work arrangements have given me balance I required at work	172	1.00	5.00	4.1686	.78028
All our staffs are required to have tele Apps in their phones and computers to facilitate working online	172	2.00	5.00	2.5930	.82189
Valid N (listwise)	172				
Averages Scores				3.67	0.94

The mean of the means for all the factors under flexible work schedule on employee productivity stood at (3.67). This showed high agreement on the implementation of various flexible work schedule programs in the law firms. This condition is further confirmed by the low average standard deviation for all the factors (0.94), which essentially shows that the observations are closely held about the mean acknowledging the high application of flexible work schedule in the law firms. Nevertheless, the individual mean scores regarding tele Apps (3.19) and work online (3.35) were considerably low, highlighting the need to improve these conditions towards enhancing work life balance.

Asked on the most satisfying parts of implementation of flexible work arrangement programs, most respondents cited flexibility on the number of days an employee can work if the hours are billed and sharing of information freely at work.

Other advantage cited, especially by the employee, is the ability to adjust their daily or weekly working hours in a way that best fit their preferences. The results show that flexible work schedules are designed to help individuals balance their family and work responsibilities by giving them the option of choosing when to work, how much to work, and where to work. These findings agree with the findings by Galinsky and Halpern (2005) who pointed out that there are benefits associated with flexible work schedules as it relates to increased effective commitment and decreases turnover intentions among all employees.

#### Employee productivity in law firms

This section covers descriptive statistics on productivity in law firms. The information was sought, only from the management team which was considered well conversant with the details sought in law firms in Nakuru County, Kenya.

**Table 2: Employee productivity**

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Our employees are good in problem solving	42	1.00	5.00	3.7616	1.02947
Most of our employees know how to work as teams	42	1.00	5.00	4.3605	.91655
Communication among our employees is good	42	1.00	5.00	4.4884	.92710
Communication between our employees and management is good	42	1.00	5.00	4.3430	.82633
Staff turnover in our firm is high	42	1.00	5.00	4.3605	.91655
Staff replacement presents a considerable challenge to our firm	42	1.00	5.00	4.4884	.92710
Our employees show a lot of commitment to their work	42	1.00	5.00	4.3430	.82633
Valid N (listwise)	42				
Average Scores				4.24	0.92



The mean of the means for all employee productivity dimensions assessed stood at (4.24). This was indicative that the level of employee productivity was generally good, as shared by the organizational management. The average standard deviation for all the factors assessed stood at a low of (0.92), indicating that the responses were closely held about the mean. This affirmed the good state of employee productivity in the law firms as shared by the management.

The respondents pointed out problem solving and good communication skills were the biggest assets that employee exhibited that would best serve to enhance employee productivity. The statistics support empirical foundations by Bucăța & Rizescu (2017) who pointed out that communication plays an important role in enhancing work effectiveness of an organization.

#### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In terms of flexible work schedules, the results showed that various flexible work schedules were widely used in law firms. Employees were allowed to work if the hours were billed and information was openly shared at work, according to the findings. Other benefits mentioned, particularly by the employee, were the freedom to change their daily or weekly working hours to better suit their tastes. Nonetheless, more needs to be done in terms of technical innovation as a method for increasing organizational flexibility. Organizations also needed to create techniques to assist employees work within their own schedules while still allowing them to continue their education. The advantages of having a flexible work schedule for legal businesses include

increased staff morale and dedication, improved timeliness, and reduced absenteeism. Flexible work schedules had a substantial, positive, and statistically significant link with employee productivity, according to the Pearson correlation study results. According to the results of the regression study, a flexible work schedule was a useful predictor of employee productivity in legal companies.

The study revealed that flexible work schedule was critical in influencing organizational employee productivity. According to the study's findings, employee productivity was generally high, as reported by organizational management. According to the respondents, the main assets that employees demonstrated that would best serve to boost employee productivity was flexible work schedule.

Recommendation was made on the need to improve the flexible work schedule paradigm now in place in law firms. This advice is given based on the findings that it was critical in determining the degree of staff productivity. To further improve the flexible work schedule framework in legal firms, the report suggested pursuing technological developments that would increase flexibility for employees while decreasing operating expenses for the companies.

#### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Due to restricted resources, the study's scope was confined to law firms in Nakuru County, Kenya. A broader population should be considered because it will help to increase comparability and consider different working settings. The study suggests that future studies differentiate between different types of legal firms in their analysis.

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