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# The 24 hour economic policy and job creation in Ghana: A myth or reality?

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### ABSTRACT :

The National Democratic Congress (NDC), Ghana's leading opposition political party, has unveiled an ambitious economic strategy ahead of the country's forthcoming general elections in 2024. This strategy, known as the '24-hour economy' policy, seeks to transform Ghana's economy by stimulating selected sectors to 'operate 24/7, preferably in a three-shift system of eight hours each. The goal behind the policy is to enhance productivity, bolster competitiveness and cultivate sustainable high-paying jobs in Ghana. The concept of a '24-hour economy' is in itself not novel. It refers to an economic system where business operations, services and consumer access to services are available around-the-clock. The proposal for a 24-hour economy in Ghana is not just an ambitious proposal but a feasible venture, motivated by successful global models. As citizens engage in this discussion, a deeper analysis that considers sector-specific intricacies, incorporates international best practices, and outlines practical pathways for implementation is vital. The success of this transformative economic policy lies in fastidious planning, transparent communication, and a steadfast commitment to addressing the multifaceted needs of Ghanaian society, guided by the valuable lessons provided by global models. This model is an extension of the traditional business hours to offer continuous economic activity, aimed at enhancing productivity and accommodating a globalised market where different time zones interact (Bechtel et al., 2007).

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of a 24-hour economy involves continuous economic activities throughout the day and night, allowing businesses and services to operate without interruption. This model has been successfully implemented in various global cities, such as New York and Tokyo, leading to increased economic output and job creation (Smith, 2020). In the context of Ghana, exploring the potential for a 24-hour economy is particularly relevant due to the country's on-going efforts to boost economic growth and development (Adomako, 2018).

#### *Problem Statement*

Ghana's economy, while showing signs of growth, still faces significant challenges, including high unemployment rates and underutilization of infrastructure (World Bank, 2021). The traditional economic model, which largely operates within standard business hours, may not be sufficient to address these issues. Therefore, this research aims to explore the impact of a 24-hour economy on Ghana's economic landscape, identifying potential benefits regarding job creation and implementation challenges.

#### *Objectives of the study*

1. To assess nature of job the policy provided
2. To assess the implementation challenges of the policy

#### *Research Questions*

1. Has the policy provided the intended job?
2. What is the implementation challenge?

### Literature Review

The concept of a 24-hour economy is rooted in the continuous operation of businesses and services, allowing economic activities to take place at all hours. Cities such as New York, Tokyo, and London have implemented this model, resulting in various economic benefits. New York City, often referred to as "the city that never sleeps," has seen increased economic output and employment opportunities due to its 24-hour economy (Smith, 2020). Similarly, Tokyo's around-the-clock operations have contributed significantly to its GDP growth (Johnson, 2019). Example of a Successful 24-Hour Economy: New York City New York City serves as a prime example of a successful 24-hour economy. The city's transport system operates 24/7,

supporting businesses and services that cater to both residents and tourists at all hours. Studies have shown that New York's night-time economy generates billions of dollars annually and supports a significant portion of the city's workforce (Doe, 2018).

### ***Theories Relevant to a 24-Hour Economy***

The study is premised on the Keynesian Economic theory and the demand and supply theory. According to Keynesian economics, increased economic activity can lead to higher aggregate demand, which in turn stimulates economic growth (Keynes, 1936). In the context of a 24-hour economy, continuous operation can lead to sustained economic activities, reducing unemployment and increasing overall productivity. Supply and Demand theory suggests that markets are most efficient when supply matches consumer demand. A 24-hour economy can better match supply with demand, as businesses operate continuously to meet consumer needs at all hours (Marshall, 1890). This can lead to more efficient markets and higher consumer satisfaction.

The '24-hour economy' is not only confined to certain sectors like hospitality or emergency services but is increasingly being applied to manufacturing and public sectors. Numerous advanced economies, including the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France and Australia have successfully implemented the policy in various forms. New York City is often cited as a quintessential example with its non-stop public transportation and vibrant nightlife contributing significantly to its economy. Similarly, London's extension of subway service hours has been linked to an increase in employment and local authority revenues. In Asia, cities like Hong Kong and Seoul offer round-the-clock services in many sectors, adapting to the demands of their dense, urban populations and significant international business traffic. The primary benefit of a '24-hour economy' is the potential for increased economic output and employment opportunities. Extending operational hours helps businesses maximize their asset utilisation rates and accommodate different international markets and time zones. Additionally, it can lead to better utilisation of public infrastructure, which often remains underused during off-peak hours.

A '24-hour economy' also diversifies options for consumers, enhancing overall customer satisfaction and lifestyle convenience. However, despite the numerous benefits, the transition to a '24-hour economy' is not without challenges. These include concerns over noise pollution, public safety and the health of workers who may be required to work unconventional hours. There are also challenges related to regulatory adjustments, particularly in terms of labour laws, business licensing and urban planning. In the context of developing economies, implementing a '24-hour economy' could be seen as a strategy to accelerate economic development and reduce unemployment. For example, studies in regions like sub-Saharan Africa have suggested that extending hours in sectors such as manufacturing and ICT services can attract foreign direct investment and open new markets. However, such transitions require robust infrastructure development, particularly in energy supply and security services, to ensure that the expansion into night-time hours is viable and sustainable. In addition to Ghana in the sub-Saharan Africa region, Kenya is also contemplating the adoption of a '24-hour economy' policy.

The announcement of the '24-hour economy' policy proposal has generated much discourse across the social, economic and political landscape in Ghana. Notably however, there has been a conspicuous absence of an empirical analysis of the policy to evaluate its potential economic impact. Such an analysis is essential to inform and guide public debate. The proposed '24-hour economy' policy in Ghana has garnered widespread support across various facets of the Ghanaian society, demonstrating a collective sense of optimism about its potential impacts on the Ghanaian economy. Key stakeholders ranging from industry, civil society organisations, academia, politicians, to various interest groups have largely voiced favourable opinions. Prominently, the Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC), a major labour organisation representing workers nationwide

### ***Case Studies of Countries with 24-Hour Economies***

Examining the experiences of other countries that have implemented 24-hour economies provides valuable insights for Ghana. This section will cover case studies from the United States, Japan, and the United Kingdom. United States: New York City New York City's success with a 24-hour economy can be attributed to several factors, including its robust infrastructure, diverse population, and strong policy support. The city's night-time economy, which includes industries such as entertainment, hospitality, and transport, plays a crucial role in its overall economic health (Smith, 2020). Japan: Tokyo Tokyo's 24-hour economy has been driven by its efficient public transport system, cultural acceptance of night-time activities, and government policies that support continuous operations. The city has seen significant economic benefits, including increased tourism and higher productivity (Johnson, 2019). United Kingdom: London London's 24-hour economy is supported by its extensive public transport network, diverse cultural offerings, and strong government support. The city has leveraged its night-time economy to boost tourism, create jobs, and enhance its global competitiveness (Brown, 2017).

### ***Benefits of a 24-Hour Economy***

The proposal by former President John Dramani Mahama to establish a 24-hour economy has sparked a thought-provoking conversation within Ghana's political and economic circles. As we explore the nuances of the proposal, it becomes apparent that his inspiration is significantly drawn from successful global implementations, particularly in the UK and the US. These international models serve as compelling examples, illustrating the potential for economic growth, job creation, and heightened productivity associated with the 24-hour economy. Studies reveal that, in UK, the night-time economy has played a substantial role in bolstering economic robustness, contributing between £17.7 billion to £26.3 billion. This success story underscores the transformative impact that this policy can have on Ghana. London's night-time economy has not only elevated economic metrics but has also generated hundreds of thousands of direct and indirect jobs. Similarly, in the US, nearly two out of every five employees operate within the 24-hour economy system, emphasising the widespread acceptance and integration of non-traditional working hours. Increased Economic Activity, the continuous operations of businesses are expected to increase economic activity, with businesses reporting higher sales and customer engagement. The

creation of night-time jobs provided employment opportunities for individuals who prefer or require flexible working hours. Businesses operating 24/7 provide a competitive advantage, attracting more customers and increasing market share.

### ***Perceived Implementation Challenges***

Despite the promise embedded in this vision, skepticism has arisen, particularly from opponents within the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP), questioning the novelty of the proposal. This skepticism underscores the need for a meticulously crafted implementation plan, one that does not merely replicate existing practices but addresses sector-specific nuances to ensure the proposal's genuine impact. The role of civil society in shaping the narrative around the proposed 24-hour economy is crucial, and organisations such as Ghana Federation of Labour (GFL) have expressed support by highlighting potential benefits for their members and the broader community. This endorsement underscores the importance of a collaborative approach, echoing the inclusive models observed in successful economies globally.

Furthermore, the emphasis on a robust police service as a linchpin of the 24-hour economy strategy aligns with successful models seen in other nations. Practical examples from these countries highlight the crucial role of effective law enforcement during night-time operations. As Ghana evaluates the readiness of the Ghana Police Service to handle the demands associated with this shift, drawing from international best practices becomes not just an option but a necessity.

Successful implementation of a 24-hour economy requires robust infrastructure, including reliable power supply, efficient public transport, and advanced telecommunications. The lack of adequate infrastructure could hinder the full realization of the benefits of a 24-hour economy in Ghana (World Bank, 2021). Ensuring safety and security during night-time operations is a significant concern. Businesses and employees may be reluctant to operate or work during these hours without adequate security measures, which could limit the adoption of 24-hour operations (Miller, 2020). The shift to a 24-hour economy requires changes in cultural attitudes and work habits. In Ghana, where traditional working hours are deeply ingrained, this transition may face resistance from both businesses and workers (Green, 2021).

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### **Addressing the challenges**

However, it is crucial to acknowledge potential challenges, such as the impact on workers' health and family time. Striking a delicate balance between economic growth and social welfare is paramount. Drawing inspiration from social welfare models implemented globally, Ghana's model should incorporate policies that prioritise the well-being of the workforce, ensuring sustainable economic development. To effectively implement a 24-hour economy, practical pathways must be outlined, incorporating lessons learned from global models. This includes tailored sector-specific strategies, consultation with industry experts, and pilot programmes to test the viability of extended operating hours. Collaboration with businesses, civil society, and law enforcement agencies, as witnessed in successful global models, will be instrumental in ensuring a smooth transition.

The government should prioritize investments in infrastructure, particularly in areas that support continuous economic activities, such as energy, transportation, and telecommunications. A reliable and affordable power supply is crucial for businesses to operate around the clock. The government should invest in renewable energy sources and upgrade the national grid to ensure stable electricity for 24-hour operations. Efficient public transportation systems should be expanded and made available during night hours to support workers and consumers. This includes enhancing road networks and expanding public transit services, such as buses and trains, to operate on a 24-hour basis. High-speed internet and reliable communication networks are essential for modern businesses, especially in a 24-hour economy.

The government should work with private sector partners to expand broadband access and ensure reliable communication infrastructure across the country. Labour policies should be updated to protect workers' rights, ensure fair wages, and promote work-life balance in a 24-hour economy. The government should enforce minimum wage laws and ensure that workers in the 24-hour economy receive fair compensation, including overtime pay and benefits such as health insurance and pensions. Policies should promote flexible work arrangements and allow for shift rotations that prevent worker burnout. Employers should be encouraged to implement policies that support work-life balance, such as flexible scheduling, adequate rest periods, and family-friendly practices. The government should strengthen regulations to protect workers from precarious employment conditions, such as temporary or part-time contracts with limited benefits. Labour unions and worker advocacy groups should be supported in their efforts to represent workers' interests.

The government should implement comprehensive security measures to ensure the safety of businesses, workers, and consumers during night-time operations. Law enforcement agencies should increase patrols and establish a visible presence in areas with high night-time activity. This includes deploying more police officers, installing CCTV cameras, and improving street lighting in commercial and residential areas. Businesses should be encouraged to invest in security systems, such as surveillance cameras and alarm systems, and to provide security personnel during night shifts. The government can offer tax incentives or subsidies to businesses that invest in enhanced security measures. Law enforcement agencies should work closely with local communities to build trust and encourage cooperation in maintaining public safety. Community policing initiatives can help identify and address security concerns specific to different areas.

**Tailored Sector-Specific Strategies:** Develop customised plans for different sectors, considering their unique demands and challenges. Collaborate with industry experts to design strategies that optimise the benefits of extended operating hours, ensuring that the implementation aligns with the specific needs and dynamics of each sector. **Consultation and Pilot Programmes:** Engage in extensive consultations with stakeholders, including businesses, workers, and communities. Prioritise open dialogue to gather diverse perspectives and insights. Initiate pilot programmes in selected sectors to test the feasibility of extended operating hours before full-scale implementation, allowing for adjustments based on real-world feedback and experiences.

Efficient collaboration between businesses, civil society, and law enforcement agencies is required to ensure a unified and smooth transition to a 24-hour economy. Draw lessons from successful global models that have thrived on inclusive, collaborative frameworks, promoting a collective effort towards achieving the goals of increased economic activity and productivity. Prioritise the health and family time of workers by incorporating social welfare models into the vision for a 24-hour economy. Implement policies that promote work-life balance, ensuring that extended operating hours do

not compromise the well-being of the workforce. This includes measures to address potential health impacts and provisions for family support, contributing to sustainable economic development in the long term.

The government and private sector should launch awareness campaigns to educate the public about the benefits of a 24-hour economy and to encourage acceptance of new work patterns. These campaigns can highlight success stories from other countries and emphasize the economic opportunities that a 24-hour economy can bring. Educational institutions and vocational training centres should offer programs that prepare workers for the demands of a 24-hour economy. This includes training in time management, customer service, and technical skills that are in demand in 24-hour sectors. The transition to a 24-hour economy should be phased in gradually, allowing businesses and workers time to adapt. The government can start by extending operating hours in key sectors, such as retail and hospitality, and then gradually expand to other sectors.

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## Methodology

This paper employed a combination of both qualitative research and secondary research methodology. The qualitative research is conventionally adopted to study a research phenomenon from the perspectives and experiences of subjects. The research problem is qualitatively oriented as people have their own subjective opinions on the pros and cons of hung parliament and how it shapes government service delivery making the qualitative research approach the most appropriate research to adopt in this paper. The secondary research on the other hand involves a review of scholarly perspectives on the research subject matter and a review of other documents that reflect the research subject matter. The study sampled Parliamentarians, CSOs, and other subject matter experts. Collections of data from all these sources constitute methodological triangulation which helps to validate research findings. The research participants were selected with the use of a purposive sampling strategy. This sampling strategy describes the selection of a research participant based on the person's knowledge and information wielded on the research phenomenon.

In this study, this sampling technique ensured that respondents could accurately respond to the research questions. Both primary and secondary data sources were used in the study. The primary data was taken from the research targeted population whereas the secondary data was taken from other studies and reports. The research instrument used for data collection was mainly interviews which essentially afforded respondents and the research greater freedom in speaking to the research questions and probing the responses of subjects respectively. Data collected in the study was analysed using thematic narration and logical deductions. This entails searching for similarities in responses, searching for dominant themes, and inferring from manifest responses of respondents. More specifically, data for the study was analysed by using the approach suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) which includes: (i) Familiarization with the data, (ii) Coding of the data, (iii) Identifying initial themes, (iv) Searching for themes across transcripts, (v) Reviewing themes and (iv) Writing of the report.

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## Results and Discussions

The crux of this paper is to assess whether or not the 24 hour economic policy in Ghana is a myth or reality. Based on the interview responses, it is evident that the 24 hour economic policy cannot be considered entirely as a myth as it is working in well in countries where is being practiced, rather, once the basic requirements such as infrastructure, security, effective efforts and commitment are met. Responses again reveal that for effectiveness, policy framers should consider sector by sector approaches since each sector has its own peculiarities in terms of need and demands.

Analysis of the interview data suggests that, the 24-hour economic policy is not a myth (mere rhetoric) but can help deliver the expected jobs when properly implemented. Most participants acknowledge that though it is a good policy, it will not succeed in some sectors of the economy due to sector specific peculiarities or challenges. This resonates with the existing literature which was confirmed by the respondents that: i) set in motion, pilot programmes in selected sectors to quiz the feasibility of extended operating hours before full-scale implementation, allowing for adjustments based on real-world feedback and experiences ii) develop tailored or customised blueprint for different sectors, considering their unique demands and challenges. Collaborate with industry experts to design strategies that optimise the benefits of extended operating hours, ensuring that the implementation aligns with the specific needs and dynamics of each sector.

The data further reveals the implementation challenges of the 24 hour economic policy. Specifically, these vignettes from participants confirm these claims that successful implementation of a 24-hour economy requires robust infrastructure, including reliable power supply, efficient public transport, and advanced telecommunications. The lack of adequate infrastructure could hinder the full realization of the benefits of a 24-hour economy in Ghana (World Bank, 2021). In the case of Ghana's structural deficits, this is a sector specific challenge.

*“That with the 24 hour economic policy job will be created as more people would have to be employed to cater for the extended periods. The trickle-down effects will be improvement in the well-being of the citizens and the general socio-economic well-being of the state”.*

*“The implementation of the 24 hour economic policy will ease the unemployment pressure on the government and reduce its related problems such as armed robbery, corruption and general insecurity. It will increase productivity which will in turn enhance the general economic performance of the country as production will be a continuous one”.*

*“Data gathered from the field revealed that, the implementation of policy amid the existing structures as a country, it will be effective in some sectors of the economy than other sectors (that is specific). That is the implementation of the 24 hour economic policy in some sectors will face some challenges that will render it ineffective”.*

The 24 hour economic policy just as any other policy cannot be implemented without a hitch. Data gathered revealed that in spite of the policy's prospects, there will be some implementation setbacks.

*“It is revealed that, the 24 hour policy will have a toll on government regarding funding especially from sectors that do not generate the needed revenue to offset cost as more labour will be required, and that government expenditure on labour is likely to double. This will be a setback to the policy because Ghana as a country is unable to generate the expected revenue to meet labour cost”*

*“To run this policy well as a state, security situation must be enhanced to safeguard workers especially those who will be at post during the night. In areas where security situation is not safe the policy’s implementation may face some sorts of challenges”*

*“It is also shown by data that, government policy (political interference) is likely to affect its implementation especially when there is a change of government. Being a political campaign promise, politicians may want sabotage the policy for political gains which may affect its sustainability and overall impact on lives and on the economy”.*

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## Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the 24-hour economic policy as proposed by the NDC is not a mere rhetoric. Despite the likely challenges regarding implementation due to infrastructural deficits among others. Its success lies in fastidious planning, transparent communication, and a steadfast commitment to addressing the multifaceted needs of Ghanaian society, guided by the valuable lessons provided by global models.

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## Recommendations for Further Research

To deepen the understanding of a 24-hour economy and its impact on Ghana, the following areas are suggested for further research:

Future research could explore the long-term impact of a 24-hour economy on the quality of employment, including job security, wages, and working conditions. This would provide insights into the social implications of continuous work patterns.

There should be detailed studies on the impact of a 24-hour economy on specific sectors, such as manufacturing, healthcare, and education, would help identify sector-specific challenges and opportunities.

A study on how culture influences the adoption of a 24-hour economy in Ghana and the effects on work-life balance would be valuable. This could include studies on worker satisfaction, family dynamics, and community impacts.

Comparative investigation between Ghana and other countries that have successfully implemented a 24-hour economy could provide valuable lessons and best practices that can be adapted to the Ghanaian context.

Further research could investigate how a 24-hour economy affects the informal sector in Ghana, which constitutes a significant portion of the economy. This would help understand how informal businesses and workers adapt to continuous operations.

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