The Impact of Work-Life Balance on Employee Performance: A Study of the University of Abuja

Onuk Nelson Ikie[1]* and Kennedy Kenchuks Chukwueme[2]

[1] Department of Public Administration, University of Abuja, Abuja, Nigeria

[2] Department of Political Science, University of Abuja, Abuja, Nigeria

Corresponding[1]*: nelson.onuk@gmail.com, [2]kenchukwueme2702@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance at the University of Abuja. Using a survey research design, data were collected from teaching and non-teaching staff and analysed with multiple regression and ANOVA in SPSS 26.0. The target sample size based on Krejcie and Morgan's table was 331, while the final regression analysis was based on 279 usable responses after data screening. Role Theory provided the theoretical foundation by explaining how competing work and non-work roles can create strain and influence performance. The regression model shows a strong positive association between perceived work-life balance conditions and employee performance ($B = 1.276$, $p < .001$). However, work-life balance barriers showed a negative but statistically non-significant relationship with employee performance at the 5% level ($B = -0.262$, $p = .076$). The findings indicate that supportive work-life balance arrangements are relevant to staff performance, while the evidence for the independent effect of barriers is not statistically conclusive in this sample. The study recommends flexible scheduling, role-boundary training, wellness support, and family-responsive policies that reflect the realities of university work roles.

Keywords: work-life balance, employee performance, role theory, flexible work arrangements, public university administration.

1. Introduction

Work-life balance has become a central issue in human resource management because employees are expected to meet organizational targets while also managing family, health, social, and personal responsibilities. In universities, this concern is especially important because academic and administrative staff perform multiple roles, including teaching, research, student support, committee work, record management, and public service. When these roles are not properly balanced, employees may experience stress, fatigue, reduced commitment, and weaker performance.

The University of Abuja provides a useful setting for examining this issue. Like many public universities in Nigeria, it operates in an environment marked by increasing student numbers, administrative pressure, resource constraints, and expectations for quality teaching and research. These conditions can intensify role conflict and make work-life balance a practical concern for both teaching and non-teaching employees. Supportive work-life balance practices can help employees manage competing demands, while weak support may create strain and reduce productivity.

Although prior studies have examined work-life balance in Nigerian organizations, relatively fewer studies have focused specifically on how work-life balance relates to employee performance within a public university context. This study addresses that gap by investigating work-life balance and employee performance at the University of Abuja. The study contributes to public administration and educational management by providing evidence that can guide staff welfare policies, flexible work arrangements, wellness programs, and role-management interventions in Nigerian higher education institutions.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Inadequate work-life balance creates risks for employee well-being, staff performance, and institutional effectiveness. Employees who face persistent conflict between work responsibilities and personal obligations may struggle to remain motivated, focused, and productive. In the university environment, the problem is intensified by overlapping academic, administrative, and family roles. Technology-enabled communication can also extend work beyond official hours, making it more difficult for employees to disconnect from institutional demands.

The problem is therefore not only whether employees work hard, but whether the work environment enables them to manage multiple roles without excessive strain. The University of Abuja is not exempt from these challenges. Understanding the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance can help the institution design policies that support staff while maintaining productivity and service quality.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the effect of work-life balance on employee performance at the University of Abuja. The specific objectives are:

1. to examine the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance at the University of Abuja;
2. to evaluate whether work-life-balance barriers significantly influence employee performance at the University of Abuja.

1.3 Research hypotheses

The hypotheses are stated in their null forms as follows:

H01: There is no significant relationship between work-life

balance and employee performance at the University of Abuja.

H02: Work-life balance barriers do not have a significant effect on employee performance at the University of Abuja.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Work-life balance

Work-life balance refers to the ability of individuals to manage work and non-work responsibilities in a way that allows them to perform effectively while maintaining personal well-being. In the Nigerian context, work-life balance is shaped by long working hours, family expectations, economic pressure, gender roles, commuting stress, and limited institutional support (Adisa, Mordi, & Osabutey, 2017; Akanji, 2012). These pressures can be stronger in sectors where employees have demanding service responsibilities and limited flexibility.

Studies of work-life balance in Nigeria show that employees often experience a gap between formal policies and actual workplace practice. Ojo, Salau, and Falola (2014), for example, found differences in work-life balance practices across banking, education, and electricity sectors, and noted that organizational culture and managerial support influence whether such policies are used. Similarly, Akanji, Mordi, and Ojo (2015) argued that weak managerial support, fear of job loss, and limited awareness can prevent employees from using work-life balance arrangements effectively. These studies suggest that work-life balance should be treated not only as an individual issue, but also as an institutional and managerial responsibility.

2.2 Employee performance

Employee performance refers to the extent to which employees complete assigned tasks, contribute to institutional goals, and demonstrate efficiency, commitment, and quality in their work. In universities, performance includes teaching quality, research activity, administrative efficiency, student support, punctuality, collegial behavior, and timely completion of assigned duties. Employee performance is therefore not limited to output quantity; it also includes the quality and reliability of work behavior.

Previous research emphasizes that performance is influenced by individual ability, motivation, leadership, training, work environment, reward systems, and employee engagement (Anitha, 2014; Gruman & Saks, 2011; Markos & Sridevi, 2010). In public institutions, performance can also be affected by infrastructure, workload, promotion systems, and staff welfare. A work environment that helps employees manage personal and professional responsibilities is likely to support better motivation and effectiveness.

2.3 Work-life balance and employee performance

Work-life balance and employee performance are connected because employees who experience lower role conflict are more likely to have the energy, focus, and psychological availability needed for effective work. Koubova and Buchko (2013) argued that personal life and work performance should not be viewed as opposing goals; rather, balance can support both well-being and productive work behavior. Johari, Tan, and Zulkarnain (2018) also showed that workload, autonomy, and work-life balance are relevant to job performance.

In Nigeria, Mmakwe and Ojiabo (2018) linked work-life balance to employee performance in the banking sector, while Ogechi and Nwaeke (2019) found that arrangements such as part-time work and delegation can support task completion. These findings support the expectation that work-life balance may improve performance. However, the relationship may vary across institutional settings, which justifies examining the University of Abuja as a specific public university case.

2.4 Theoretical framework

This study adopts Role Theory as its theoretical framework. Role Theory explains how individuals occupy multiple social and organizational roles, each with expectations and responsibilities (Katz & Kahn, 1978). When expectations from different roles compete, role conflict and role strain may occur. Such strain can reduce well-being and performance because the individual has limited time, energy, and attention to satisfy all role demands.

Role Theory is appropriate for this study because university employees often combine professional roles as lecturers, administrators, researchers, supervisors, and service staff with personal roles as parents, spouses, caregivers, community members, and learners. Work-life balance policies can reduce role conflict by giving employees more flexibility and support. In this study, the theory helps explain why supportive work-life balance conditions may be positively associated with employee performance, while barriers to balance may weaken performance or increase strain.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design, population and sample

The study employed a survey research design. The population consisted of teaching and non-teaching staff of the University of Abuja, estimated at 2,300 employees based on institutional records. This population was appropriate because both academic and administrative employees experience work demands that may affect work-life balance and performance.

Using Krejcie and Morgan's sample-size table, the target sample for a population of 2,300 was approximately 331 respondents. Questionnaires were administered to staff, and after screening for incomplete or unusable responses, 279 valid responses were available for regression analysis. This explains the total degrees of freedom of 278 reported in the regression output. The usable response rate relative to the target sample was approximately 84.3%.

3.2 Measurement and reliability

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire measured on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire covered employee performance, perceived work-life balance conditions, and work-life balance barriers. The employee-performance items measured perceived task completion, productivity, reliability, and contribution to institutional goals. The work-life balance items measured the extent to which employees perceived their work arrangements as supportive of role management, while the

barrier items captured pressures that may obstruct balance, such as workload, role conflict, and limited flexibility.

Content validity was addressed by aligning the questionnaire items with the study objectives, variables, and literature. The reliability value previously stated as 6.9 has been corrected to 0.69, which is the appropriate Cronbach alpha format. Although slightly below the conventional 0.70 threshold, the value is close to the acceptable level for exploratory survey research and is therefore treated as adequate with caution.

3.3 Model specification and analysis

Data were analyzed using multiple regression and ANOVA in SPSS 26.0. The coded variable labels in the original output have been replaced with clearer construct names to improve readability. The dependent variable was employee performance. The two predictors were perceived work-life balance conditions and work-life balance barriers.

The model is specified as follows:

EP = beta0 + beta1(WLB Conditions) + beta2(WLB Barriers) + e

where EP represents employee performance, WLB Conditions represents perceived supportive work-life-balance conditions, WLB Barriers represents barriers to achieving work-life balance, and e represents the error term.

4. Results

Table 1 presents the model summary. The R-square value of .863 indicates that the predictors account for 86.3% of the variation in employee performance in this sample. Because this value is high for survey-based organizational research, it should be interpreted cautiously and in relation to the measurement structure of the questionnaire.

Table 1. Regression model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	N
1	.929	.863	.862	.46450	279

Note. Predictors: perceived work-life balance conditions and work-life balance barriers. Dependent variable: employee performance.

Table 2 shows that the regression model is statistically significant overall, $F(2, 276) = 870.748$, $p < .001$. This means that the set of work-life balance-related predictors jointly explains a significant amount of variation in employee performance.

Table 2. ANOVA for the regression model

Model	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F / Sig.
1	Regression	375.752	2	187.876	F = 870.748; Sig. = .000
	Residual	59.551	276	.216	
	Total	435.303	278		

Note. SPSS reports Sig. = .000; this should be interpreted as $p < .001$. Dependent variable: employee performance.

Table 3 presents the coefficients. Perceived work-life-balance conditions have a positive and statistically significant relationship with employee performance ($B = 1.276$, $p < .001$). Therefore, H01 is rejected. Work-life-balance barriers have a negative coefficient ($B = -0.262$), but the result is not statistically significant at the 5% level ($p = .076$). Therefore, H02 is not rejected. The standardized beta above 1.00 for perceived work-life-balance conditions suggests possible overlap or suppression among predictors; therefore, the coefficient should be interpreted cautiously, and future studies should report formal multicollinearity diagnostics such as VIF and tolerance.

Table 3. Regression coefficients

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Decision
Constant	.328	.055	-	5.993	.000	-
Perceived WLB conditions	1.276	.157	1.185	8.115	.000	Significant positive effect
WLB barriers/challenges	-.262	.147	-.260	-1.780	.076	Not significant at 5%

Note. WLB = work-life balance. SPSS reports Sig. = .000; this should be interpreted as $p < .001$. Dependent variable: employee performance.

5. Discussion of Findings

The findings indicate that perceived work-life balance conditions are strongly and positively associated with employee performance at the University of Abuja. This supports the view that when employees perceive the institution as supportive of balancing work and personal roles, they are more likely to report stronger performance. In practical terms, flexible scheduling, supportive supervision, wellness programs, and role clarity may help employees manage competing demands more effectively.

The result is consistent with Role Theory. Employees in a university setting perform multiple roles, and their performance may decline when these roles conflict. Supportive work-life balance conditions can reduce role strain by allowing employees to manage work demands without neglecting family, health, and personal responsibilities. This helps explain why the positive work-life balance predictor is significant in the model.

The negative coefficient for work-life balance barriers suggests that barriers may reduce performance, but the p-value of .076 means that this effect is not statistically

significant at the 5% level in the present sample. The finding should therefore be described as a non-significant negative association rather than as evidence of a confirmed impact. This more cautious interpretation aligns the conclusion with the statistical results and avoids overstating the evidence.

Overall, the results suggest that the University of Abuja should prioritize supportive work-life balance conditions rather than treating work-life balance only as a personal responsibility of staff. The evidence is strongest for the positive role of supportive conditions, while the effect of barriers requires further examination using refined measures and possibly larger or more diverse samples.

6. Conclusion

This study examined work-life balance and employee performance at the University of Abuja. The results show that perceived work-life balance conditions are positively and significantly related to employee performance. This means that employees who perceive stronger support for balancing work and personal roles also report higher performance. The result supports the relevance of Role Theory because employees' ability to manage competing roles appears important for institutional productivity.

However, the study does not find a statistically significant effect of work-life balance barriers at the 5% level. Although the coefficient is negative, the evidence is not strong enough to conclude that the barrier measure significantly predicts employee performance in this model. The conclusion should therefore be framed around what the data support: work-life balance support matters, while the independent effect of barriers remains inconclusive in this sample.

6.1 Recommendations

1. The University should institutionalize flexible work arrangements where operationally feasible, especially for staff whose tasks can be completed without continuous physical presence.

2. The University should introduce wellness initiatives, including stress-management training, counselling support, health-awareness programs, and workload-management guidance.

3. Departments should provide workshops on managing work-life boundaries, role conflict, time pressure, and communication outside official work hours.

4. Management should strengthen family-responsive policies such as parental leave support, childcare-related assistance, and fair scheduling for staff with caregiving responsibilities.

5. Supervisors should be trained to identify role strain and to support staff performance through realistic workload allocation and clear expectations.

6.2 Limitations and future research

This study is limited to the University of Abuja and may not fully represent all Nigerian universities or other public institutions. The final regression analysis was based on 279 usable responses, which is below the target sample of 331. The reliability coefficient of 0.69 is acceptable for exploratory work but should be improved in future studies. In addition, the high R-square value and standardized beta above 1.00 suggest that future research should report multicollinearity statistics and use more clearly separated measures.

Future studies should compare multiple universities, include qualitative interviews, and examine whether work-life balance policies operate differently for academic and non-academic staff. Further research may also explore gender, age, rank, department, workload, and family status as possible moderators of the relationship between work-life balance and performance.

References

i. Adisa, T. A., Mordi, C., & Osabutey, E. L. C. (2017). Exploring the implications of the influence of organizational culture on work-life balance practices: Evidence from Nigerian medical doctors. Personnel Review, 46(3), 454-473.

ii. Ahmad, S., & Shahzad, K. (2011). HRM and employee performance: A case of university teachers of Azad Jammu and Kashmir in Pakistan. African Journal of Business Management, 5(13), 5249-5253.

iii. Akanji, B. (2012). Realities of work-life balance in Nigeria: Perceptions of role conflict and coping beliefs. Business, Management and Education, 10(2), 248-263.

iv. Akanji, B., Mordi, C., & Ojo, S. (2015). Reviewing gaps in work-life research and prospecting conceptual advancement. Economic Insights - Trends and Challenges, 4(68), 21-30.

v. Anitha, J. (2014). Determinants of employee engagement and their impact on employee performance. International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management, 63(3), 308-323.

vi. Biddle, B. J. (1986). Recent developments in Role Theory. Annual Review of Sociology, 12, 67-92.

vii. Bloom, N., Kretschmer, T., & Van Reenen, J. (2011). Are family-friendly workplace practices a valuable firm resource? Strategic Management Journal, 32(4), 343-367.

viii. Boamah, S. A., Hamadi, H. Y., Havaei, F., & Smith, H. (2022). Striking a balance between work and play: The effects of work-life interference and burnout on faculty turnover intention and career satisfaction. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 19(2), 809.

ix. Downes, C., & Koekemoer, E. (2011). Work-life balance policies: Challenges and benefits associated with implementing flexitime. SA Journal of Human Resource Management, 9(1), 1-13.

x. Faiza, T. A., & Nazir, F. S. (2015). Capacity building boosts employee performance. Industrial and Commercial Training, 47(2), 61-66.

xi. Gitongu, M. K., Kingi, W. K., & Uzel, J. M. (2016). Determinants of employees' performance of state parastatals in Kenya: A case of Kenya Ports Authority. International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 6(10), 197-204.

xii. Gruman, J. A., & Saks, A. M. (2011). Performance management and employee engagement. Human Resource Management Review, 21(2), 123-136.

xiii. Helmle, J. R., Botero, I. C., & Seibold, D. R. (2014). Factors that influence work-life balance in owners of copreneurial firms. Journal of Family Business Management, 4(2), 110-132.

xiv. Hon, A. H. Y., & Chan, W. W. (2013). The effects of group conflict and work stress on employee performance. Cornell Hospitality Quarterly, 54(2), 174-184.

xv. Johari, J., Tan, F. Y., & Zulkarnain, Z. I. T. (2018). Autonomy, workload, work-life balance and job performance among teachers. International Journal of Educational Management, 32(1), 107-120.

xvi. Katz, D., & Kahn, R. L. (1978). The social psychology of organizations. Wiley.

xvii. Khalid, S. S., & Ibrahim, B. T. (2018). Relationship between work-life balance and employee commitment among professionals in Nigeria: A study on radio journalists in Kano. International Journal of Business and Technopreneurship, 8(3), 257-268.

xviii. Koubova, V., & Buchko, A. A. (2013). Life-work balance: Emotional intelligence as a crucial component of achieving both personal life and work performance. Management Research Review, 36(7), 700-719.

xix. Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. Educational and Psychological Measurement, 30(3), 607-610.

xx. Markos, S., & Sridevi, M. S. (2010). Employee engagement: The key to improving performance. International Journal of Business and Management, 5(12), 89-96.

xxi. Masa'deh, H., Alrowwad, A., Alkhalafat, F., Obeidat, B., & Abualoush, S. (2018). The role of corporate social responsibility in enhancing firm performance from the perspective of IT employees in the Jordanian banking sector: The mediating effect of transformational leadership. Modern Applied Science, 12(7), 1-26.

xxii. Mmakwe, K. A., & Ojiabo, U. (2018). Work-life balance and employee performance in Nigerian banks, Port Harcourt. International Journal of Advanced Academic Research in Social and Management Sciences, 4(1), 107-119.

xxiii. Mowday, R. T., Porter, L. W., & Steers, R. M. (2013). Employee-organization linkages: The psychology of commitment, absenteeism, and turnover. Academic Press.

xxiv. Muda, I., Rafiki, A., & Harahap, M. R. (2014). Factors influencing employee performance: A study on Islamic banks in Indonesia. International Journal of Business and Social Science, 5(2), 73-79.

xxv. Ogechi, E. B., & Nwaeke, L. I. (2019). Assessment of work-life balance and employees' job performance in oil servicing companies in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. IIARD International Journal of Economics and Business Management, 5(3), 33-42.

xxvi. Ojo, I. S., Salau, O. P., & Falola, H. O. (2014). Work-life balance practices in Nigeria: A comparison of three sectors. Journal of Competitiveness, 6(2), 3-14.

xxvii. Pawirosumarto, S., Sarjana, P., & Gunawan, R. (2017). The effect of work environment, leadership style, and organizational culture toward job satisfaction and its implications toward employee performance. International Journal of Law and Management, 59(6), 1337-1358.

xxviii. Sadikoglu, E., & Zehir, C. (2010). Investigating the effects of innovation and employee performance on the relationship between total quality management practices and firm performance: An empirical study of Turkish firms. International Journal of Production Economics, 127(1), 13-26.

xxix. Semlali, S., & Hassi, A. (2016). Work-life balance: How can we help women IT professionals in Morocco? Journal of Global Responsibility, 7(2), 210-225.