INFLUENCE OF TELECOMMUTING ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN NIGERIAN EXPORT PROMOTION COUNCIL

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Abstract

Many individuals cherish their work because it brings food to their table. The income provides both their essential and economic, and, in the highest sense, their luxury needs. Telecommuting is the act of working at a remote location, usually at home, rather than travelling to and from an office balance of the time. Telecommunicating hasn't just been embraced in many organisations and a wide range of industries; it has been a valuable management technique to improve an organisation's effectiveness. Therefore, this study intended to appraise the contributions or influence of telecommunicating on the work-life balance in Nigerian Exporting Promotion Council, a service-based parastatal that specializes in the promotion, development and diversification of exports. The study concluded that while the satisfaction of a working individual lies in the individual's work-life balance, telecommunicating has a tremendous Influence on the work-life balance of this individual in Nigeria.

Keywords: Influence, Work-life, Balance, Telecommunicating, working individuals, job satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance can have a significant impact on job satisfaction. This is because many working individuals cherish their work and the work brings food to their table; that is, the income provides both their essential and economic needs, and, in the highest sense, their luxury needs. Studies can tell that people with a better work-life balance tend to work 25% harder than those who feel overworked (Afolabi, 2021). Work-life balance refers to how an individual manages both their work and their personal life. If you have a healthy work-life balance, you are efficient in your role. Work-life balance refers to the level of prioritisation between personal and professional activities in an individual's life and the level at which the activities that are related to their job are present in the home.

However, it is not so much about splitting your time 50/50 between work and personal responsibilities. But it is about individuals making sure they feel untroubled and content in both areas of your life. A healthy work-life balance can look like the following for individuals:

meeting deadlines at work while still having time for friends and hobbies; having enough time to sleep properly and eat well; not worrying about work when at home. Although all these can be challenging when there is also caring responsibilities, a demanding boss or health difficulties.

Telecommuting is the act of working at a remote location, usually at home, rather than travelling to and from an office. Telecommuters typically telecommute one to three days a week and commute to the office for the balance of the time. From an organizational standpoint, telecommuting is justified when the costs are balanced by the benefits. If, as is most often the case, the benefits exceed the costs, telecommuting should be actively promoted. And some of the benefits are Improvement of productivity; flexibility in schedule; increment in the time available for work; reduction of overhead for the organisation; and improvement of worker retention (and attraction).

Telecommunicating hasn't just been embraced in many organisations and a wide range of industries; it has been a valuable management technique to improve an organisation's effectiveness. In Nigeria, and the world at large, and with the new normal that has come to stay as a result of Covid 19, telecommunicating has become more popular. It has been adopted even organisations or sectors that would not be willing to adopt it before the advent of Covid 19 (Yoshiko et al, 2021).

Complicating efforts to truly understand the implications of telecommuting have been the widely varying definitions and conceptualizations of telecommuting and the diverse areas where research has taken place (Erin et al, 2021).

However, scholars' positions on the influence of telecommunicating on work-life balance have been dominant in their observations of private organisations. If this is the case then the whole working class may not be adequately represented. Therefore, this study intends to appraise the contributions or influence of telecommunicating on the work-life balance in a service-based parastatal, Nigerian Exporting Promotion Council (NEPC). This parastatal specializes in the promotion, development and diversification of exports.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Conceptual Review

Akanji (2012) observed that most of the discussions around work-life balance have been done from the purview of the negative interactions between work and family. This interaction was regarded as 'role conflict'. However, Edward and Rothbard (2000) viewed that the work-life interface is meant to present a significant social reality on how paid labour and family or private life of an individual should be classified as lesser competing priorities and excessively demanding but rather complementary elements of a full life. When a working individual accumulates too much stress over a long period, this leads to workplace burnout. Employees who work tons of overtime hours are at a high risk of burnout. Burnout can cause fatigue, mood swings, irritability and a decrease in work performance. And in turn, when mood swing set in, frustrations can be transferred to members of the family and friends. Consequently, a stiffened

relationship with family and friends will become inevitable (Epie, 2009). However, by creating a work environment that prioritizes work-life balance, employers can save money and maintain a healthier, more productive workforce. But what exactly does work-life balance look like? Because, if the concept is not properly understood, things can get a bit complicated. Work-life balance means something a little different to everyone. Over the years, the knowledge and approach of work-life balance have been constantly evolving, and it might be helpful for employers to identify the difference in opinions among the scholar, Crompton and Lyonette (2006) opined. Despite the differences in the way scholars have explained the concept, there is a meeting point. So, instead of identifying the differences as Crompton and Lyonette have suggested, what is common scholars' explanation should be paid attention to.

Thus, work-life balance refers to how an individual manages both their work and their personal life. Work-life balance refers to the level of prioritisation between personal and professional activities in an individual's life and the level at which the activities that are related to their job are present in the home. Work-life balance involves looking at how working people manage time spent at and outside of work. Time outside of work may include managing relationships, family responsibilities, and other outside interests and hobbies. If one has a healthy work-life balance, are efficient at your and to decompress (Adisa et all, 2021).
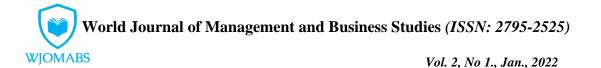
Theoretical Review

Vroom's Expectancy Theory is a management theory of motivation that can be useful in this study. The theory asserts that the motivation to perform depends on a person's interest in and value of the outcome of the performance (valence) multiplied by the person's perception of the probability that the performance will lead to the desired outcome (expectancy) (Chiang and Jane, 2008).

$$Motivation = Valence * Expectancy$$

That is motivation or effort to do a job depends on the value the worker places on the reward of doing the job multiplied by his belief that he will get the reward at the end of the performance. A valence of zero means a person doesn't care about the reward or achievement of a performance and a negative valence means the working individual doesn't want to achieve the task or its reward. In both cases, motivation (valence × expectancy) will be nil and negative respectively (Parijat and Bagga, 2014). For example, when a working individual doesn't value the reward of job performance, the motivation to do it will be below.

A zero or negative belief that the performance will yield the expected outcome (zero or negative expectancy) means poor motivation. For instance, when working individuals do not believe hard work or coming early to work will help them achieve targets, they will do neither.

Suciu et al (2013) highlighted some benefits and implications of the theory. The benefits are that it considers the needs of individuals in the motivation process; it is realistic because the value placed on motivators depends on the individual's perception; and it supports a need for a fit between objectives of organization and workers' objectives, such as actualizing an efficient

work-life balance, for high motivation. The implications for the management of organisations are that managers (1) should design a working environment that allows working individuals to meet their objectives while meeting corporate objectives; (2) should advise subordinates to reduce their expectancies and valence to avoid demotivation; (3) shouldn't promise what they can't offer staff; (4) poor performance credibility will reduce motivation; (5) consult with workers in designing motivators.
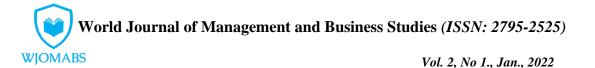
Empirical Review

Telecommunicating is one of the increasingly popular modes many organizations have adopted to work in the last decade. So, it has been a mode of working away from the workplace. It is has become the practice that provides successful organizations and their employees with the flexibility to work more productively and effectively anywhere and anytime (Tammy et al, 2015).

However, telecommunicating suffers from some challenges. It gives narrow promotional opportunities for working individuals; reduces access to resources because of the distance from the workplace. Also, maintaining the security of information and important files, and the limitation to some impromptu discussions that lead to creativity are challenging factors. Nevertheless, telecommunicating has numerous benefits for both the organisation and the works. On the one hand, it provides working individuals a personalized working environment, more independence fewer workplace expenses (of travel), better lifestyle flexibility and growing satisfaction from work. More so, it provides for employees with disabilities trouble-free working conditions. On the other hand, for organisations, it reduces costs and grows profits (Derek et al, 2019; Tammy et al, 2015).

Over the years, scholars in their studies of work-life balance have identified numerous factors or events that influence the work-life-balance situations of working individuals, and what has helped organisations implement such solutions (Nizam and Kam, 2018). Nizam and Kam (2018) identified that leave policies, when utilized and supported by those at the highest level of the hierarchy, can significantly influence the work-life balance. Leave policies are conducive to creating a work-life balance for working individuals. However, factors such as the working hours, the work arrangement and workload can hinder the balance between work and other personal activities. Other studies like that of Greenhaus et al (2003), Beauregard et al (2009), Ediriweera (2009, Ramos et al (2015), and Sirgy and Lee (2016) assert that flexible working hours, work from home initiative, part-time working and telecommunicating as other factors that significantly influence the work-life balance of working individuals.

Moreover, while analysing how effective telecommunicating is, Tammy et al (2015) identified that it can help people balance work and family challenges. It enables working individuals with the effective management of their work and non-work lives. Their study further justified the consistency across meta-analytic literature that there is a significant relationship between telecommunicating and the management of work-life balance. Telecommunicating strengthens

the balance of the conflict: more like a moderator. This study will explore the influence of telecommunicating on work-life balance in Nigeria. But instead of studying the working individuals in private organisations, it will research workers from government parastatals. With a focus on the Nigerian Exporting Promotion Council, a service-based parastatal that specializes in the promotion, development and diversification of exports.

METHODOLOGY

The design of the study is the strategy that guides the investigation throughout the process of research. The research design that is employed for this study is both descriptive and survey method and the descriptive method was adopted in the review of works of other researchers while the survey method was used in obtaining raw data from the sampled respondents. The study targets the employees at the Nigerian Exporting Promotion Council, Abuja office, through the online questionnaire method. Abuja is the federal capital of Nigeria; so, the population is a reliable representation.

Simple Random Sampling (SRS) was used to avoid subjective and bias arising from a personal choice of sampling units. Hence, each member of the population is given an equal chance of being selected and a sample size of twenty (20).

The data collected from the study is analyzed with the aid of simple percentages and chi-square (x^2). The percentage was used for this research because of its ability to transform the questionnaire into value and attribute which are quantitative. It also enables the study to analyze the variables independently. The formulated hypothesis would be tested using a non-parametric statistic called chi-square, x^2, and the formula for calculating the expected frequency is given as follows:
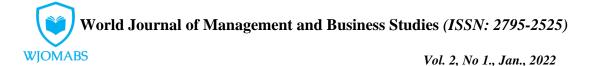
Expected frequency = $\dfrac{\text{Row total} * \text{column total}}{\text{Grand total}}$

The formula for calculating the chi-square (x^2) is given as:

$$x^2 = \Sigma \, \frac{(O_f - E_f)^2}{E_f}$$

Where:

x^2 = Chi-square

Σ = Summation

O_f = Observation frequency

E_f = Expected frequency

In any calculation, the study would either confirm or reject the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis would be confirmed if the discrepancy between the observed and expected frequency is so small that the difference could be attributed to chance. However, the null hypothesis could be rejected if the study considers that the discrepancy is so large that it could not attribute the departure to chance. In addition to the above, there is another consideration in the use of chi-

square (x^2) which is important. It is the assumption of a certain level of confidence of error margin. The degree of freedom which is a characteristic is calculated as

Critical Value = (μ-1)

μ = Numbers of options

Decision Rule

These are two sets of figures that are relevant to the decision-making rule in the chi-square (x^2). The rule is that if the calculated values of x^2 are greater than the tabulated values (or critical values), then we will accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis or vice versa.

DATA ANALYSIS

Test of Hypothesis

The hypothesis earlier formulated will be analysed in two parts and tested using the chi-square method.

The formula for calculating the chi-square (x^2) is as

$$x^2 = \frac{\Sigma (O_f - E_f)^2}{E_f}$$

Where:

x^2 = Chi-square

Σ = Summation

O_f = Observation frequency

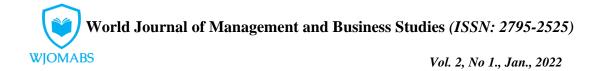E_f = Expected frequency

Decision Criteria

The decision rule is that if the calculated values of x^2 are greater than the tabulated value (or critical value), we accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis or vice versa.

Hypothesis (First Part)

H₁: The implementation of work-life balance solutions in service-based government parastatals does not contribute to employees' productivity.

Table 1

Response	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly agreed	11	55
Agreed	5	25
No idea	1	5
Disagreed	2	10
Strongly disagree	1	5
Total	**20**	**100**

Table 2

Contingency Table

Alternatives	O_f	E_f	$O_f - E_f$	$(O_f - E_f)^2$	$\dfrac{(O_f - E_f)^2}{E_f}$
Strongly agreed	11	4	7	49	12.25
Agreed	5	4	1	1	1
Disagreed	1	4	(3)	9	2.25
Strongly disagreed	2	4	(2)	4	1
No idea	1	4	(3)	9	2.25
x^2 Calculation					18.75

E_f = Total Frequency ÷ Number of Responses

$20/5 = 4$

Level of significance (α) = 5% (0.05)

Critical Value = ($\mu - 1$) * α

Where μ is No of options

= $(5 - 1) * 0.05$

= 4 (0.05)

(x^2) Tab = 9.49

Decision: Since x^2 calculated is greater than the x^2 tabulated, (18.75 > 9.49) we accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis. Hence, we can conclude that the implementation of work-life balance solutions in service-based government parastatals contributes to employees' productivity.

Hypothesis (Second Part)

H₂: Telecommunicating is a good thing but doesn't have much influence on work-life balance.

Table 3

Response	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly agreed	7	35
Agreed	8	40
No idea	2	10
Disagreed	1	5
Strongly disagree	2	10
Total	**20**	**100**

Expected frequency = $20/5 = 4$

Table 4

Contingency Table

Alternatives	O_f	E_f	$O_f - E_f$	$(O_f - E_f)^2$	$\dfrac{(O_f - E)^2}{E_f}$
Strongly agreed	7	4	3	9	2.25
Agreed	8	4	4	16	4
Disagreed	2	4	(2)	4	1
Strongly	1	4	(3)	9	2.25
No idea	2	4	(2)	2	0.50
x^2 Calculation					**10**

E_f = Total Frequency ÷ Number of Responses

$20 \div 5 = 4$

Level of significance (α) = 5% (0.05)

Critical Value = (μ – 1) * α

Where *μ* is No of options

= (5 – 1) * 0.05

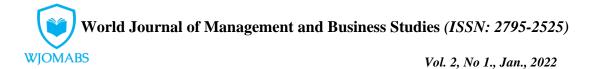= 4 (0.05)

(x^2) Tab = 9.49

Decision: Since x^2 calculated is greater than the x^2 tabulated, (10 > 9.49) we accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis. Hence, we can conclude that telecommunicating is a good thing that has got much influence on work-life balance in the service-based government parastatals.

Overall, since the study can conclude that the implementation of work-life balance solutions in service-based government parastatals contributes to employees' productivity and that telecommunicating is a good thing that got much influence on work-life balance in NEPC; therefore; telecommunicating influence work-life balance in NEPC.

Results

The research analysis revealed that telecommunicating has a great influence on the work-life balance in NEPC. This is in line with Tammy et al (2015) who noted and identified that it helps working individuals balance work and family challenges. And that it enables them to effectively administer their work and non-work lives. Telecommunicating strengthens the balance of the conflict: more like a moderator force to rapid development in the economy.

The study also revealed that the implementation of work-life balance solutions in service-based government parastatals can contribute to employees' effectiveness and productivity in Nigeria. This is in line with the view of Akanji (2012) who asserted that finding the right mix between individuals work and non-work lives, and organisations are carefully monitored to discharge a variety of work-life-balance solutions such as flexible working, job sharing, telecommuting,

compressed hours, part-time, maternity benefits and so on, it will foster workplace performance as well as high productivity of employees.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that when the imbalance between work and non-work activities are balanced, workers and employers will both be at the receiving end of the benefits. What this implies is the huge impact work-life balance can have on the satisfaction, mental health and overall happiness of a working individual as well as productivity. When employees of an organisation perform efficiently and are productive, they tend to be more satisfied with their job. This in turn boosts the level of their commitments to the organisation, and they play a vital role in the achievement of organisational objectives. Thus, providing the organisation flexibility and advantage in competition.

Despite the challenges that telecommunicating suffers, it also has numerous benefits; the most important of which is its influence in maintaining work-life balance. Some of the challenges are that it gives narrow promotional opportunities for working individuals; reduces access to resources because of the distance from the workplace; the difficulty in maintaining the security of information and important files; and the limitation to some impromptu discussions that lead to creativity are challenging factors. Nevertheless, on the one hand, it provides working individuals with a personalized working environment, more independence fewer workplace expenses (of travel), better lifestyle flexibility and growing satisfaction from work. More so, it provides for employees with disabilities trouble-free working conditions. And, on the other hand, for organisations, it reduces costs and grows profits.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the exploratory survey of this study, the research makes the following recommendations:

i. Government should make policies or effectively implement policies that can enhance the realization of a significant balance between the work and non-work lives of working individuals. Especially in the government parastatals or public service.

ii. Government should pay more attention to working from home by prioritizing telecommunicating because of its significant influence on work-life balance.

iii. Both profit and non-profit organisations (NGOs, government parastatals) should build a sustainable strategy that incorporates and strictly pays attention to the work-life balance of their employees, which is also a part of welfare.

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