EXPLORING WORK-LIFE BALANCE AS A STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING JOB PERFORMANCE AMONG SELECTED ACADEMIC STAFF OF KWARA STATE UNIVERSITY, MALETE

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Abstract
Work-life balance as a broad and complex phenomenon has continued to attract global attention because of its influence on workers' productivity. Despite the growing recognition and inherent benefits of work-life balance in enhancing job performance in an organisation, exploring it remains a persistent challenge, particularly for academic staff in higher education institutions. That is, most teaching staff in the institution have continued to pay less attention to work-life balance. The increasing demands of academic work, coupled with personal life responsibilities, have made achieving an optimal balance a significant concern for academics. This study ascertains the influence of Work-Life Balance (WLB) as a strategy on job satisfaction at Kwara State University, and examines the influence of Work-Life Balance (WLB) as a strategy on employees' well-being in Kwara State University. The study adopted a cross-sectional approach and relied heavily on qualitative research design. Purposive sampling techniques were used to select two senior and two junior staff members from the Faculty of Management and Social Sciences for interview responses. The data from the interviewees are thematically analysed. The study found that work-life balance is crucial to enhance job satisfaction and improving academic delivery at the University. Beyond that, it is also found that work-life balance greatly influences employees' social life and well-being. The study recommends that the university introduce flexible work arrangements, such as remote work options (for some categories of staff) and adjustable teaching schedules, to help academic staff balance their professional and personal responsibilities. Additionally, implementing work-life integration initiatives, including family-friendly policies, childcare support, and wellness programs, can address employees' diverse needs and foster a supportive work environment.

Key words: *Employees', Job Satisfaction, Job Performance, Well-Being, Work-Life Balance (WLB)*

Introduction

In the contemporary workplace, the concept of work-life balance has garnered significant attention from both scholars and practitioners. As the boundaries between work and personal life continue to blur due to technological advancements and evolving organizational practices, achieving a harmonious balance between professional and personal responsibilities has become a critical issue, especially regarding job performance. Work-life balance has become a critical issue in mostly the service sector, especially in Universities running different programmes. Authors are now clamouring for Work-Life Balance (WLB) as a necessity for an individual's psychological well-being and comfort at work just as Wood, Oh, Park & Kim, (2020) stressed that "work-life Balance (WLB) is necessary for an individual's psychological well-being and happiness at work". In line with the assertion of Wood, Oh, Park and Kim; Cox, (2017) noted that "balancing work and family life is more challenging for employees in the early stage of their careers". Extant literature suggests that young employees are often more dissatisfied than senior employees. Thus, the Human Resource (HR) Department should pay more attention to them to address their needs and address their worries and frustrations. It is on this basis that Kaźmierska & Stankiewicz (2022) compared older employees to younger employees by stating that "compared to older employees, younger employees have to achieve several milestones, including getting married, building a house, and making investments for future security". As such, the work-life balance is a paradigm shift to favour them. The two important precursors of a working environment are employees' well-being and job satisfaction (Lee, Back & Chan, 2015). Work-Life Balance practices are deliberate organizational cultures that are intended to lessen Work-Life struggle and empower workers to be more viable at work and in different tasks (i.e. leading to improved job performance). The move from viewing Work-Life Balance practices solely as a means of accommodating individual employees with caregiving responsibilities to recognizing their contribution to organizational performance (Maduraiveeran, 2020).

Researches have indicated that those workers who have some form of control over their working environment have a tendency to have less anxiety-related sickness, with clear implications for the idea of Work-Life Balance. The essential way organizations can encourage Work-Life Balance for their workers is through work- life practices that are generally connected with adaptable working and decreases in working time or family. Accommodating arrangements in this manner helping in making efficient service delivery (Mba, 2022). The extant literature suggests that work-life balance practices generally have a positive impact on individual and organizational profitability through productive service delivery. Needless to state here that Universities can be demanding workplaces for staff, and work-life balance can be challenging to achieve. In Kwara State University, Work-Life Balance is adopted in a way, through the adoption of hybrid lecture (i.e. combination of physical and virtual lecture (via Kwasu Learning

Management System (LMS) class) in order to give academic staff more space so as to have a healthy Work-Life Balance. Kwasu Learning Management System (LMS) contributes to Work-Life Balance has ensured flexible learning (which accommodate busy schedule and reduce stress) and also promote remote learning (i.e. allowing student-lecturer relations from home) (Kwasu Learning Management System Platform User Guide, 2023). It is against this background that the study examined the influence of Work-Life Balance as a strategy for improving job performance among academic staff of Kwara State University, Malete.

Statement of the Research Problem

The pursuit of work-life balance is not merely a matter of personal preference but has profound implications for organizational outcomes. Research has consistently shown that employees who experience a healthy balance between work and personal life exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction, which in turn enhances their overall performance. In today's fast-paced and competitive business environment, organizations are increasingly recognizing the strategic importance of fostering work-life balance to attract and retain top talent. For instance, Carlson, Grzywacz, and Zivnuska (2009) found that employees with higher work-life balance reported greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Similarly, Haar et al. (2014) demonstrated that work-life balance positively affects job satisfaction, which in turn enhances employee performance. Moreover, work-life balance reduces stress and burnout, which are significant factors that impair employees' wellbeing. Employees who perceive a supportive work environment that promotes balance are less likely to experience turnover intentions, further contributing to organizational stability and performance (Wayne, Casper, Matthews, & Allen, 2013). As such, organizations should ensure that employees who prioritize Work-Life Balance are not penalized in terms of career progression. In Kwara State University, the relationship between Work-Life Balance and job performance is not well-understood. Although Work-Life Balance is increasingly recognised as a critical aspect of increased productivity, job satisfaction and employees' wellbeing, its impact on the aforementioned criterion variables of the current study is not really visible (Kwasu Learning Management System Platform User Guide, 2023). It is on these stated problems that the study examined the influence of Work-Life Balance as a strategy for improving job performance among academic staff of Kwara State University, Malete.

Research Objectives

In order to give the study a sharp focus, the study aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. To ascertain the influence of Work-Life Balance (WLB) as a strategy on job satisfaction in Kwara State University.

2. To examine the influence of Work-Life Balance (WLB) as a strategy on employees' well-being in Kwara State University.

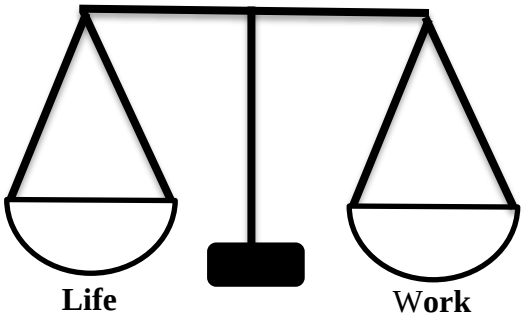
Conceptual Review

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance is generally defined as the equilibrium between work demands and personal life responsibilities, enabling individuals to fulfill both professional and personal roles satisfactorily. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) introduced the concept of work-family conflict, highlighting the bidirectional nature of the interference between work and family domains. Later, Clark (2000) introduced the work/family border theory, suggesting that individuals manage and negotiate the boundaries between work and family to achieve balance. Various dimensions of work-life balance have been identified in the literature. These include time balance (allocation of time between work and personal life), involvement balance (level of psychological involvement in work and personal life), and satisfaction balance (satisfaction with the respective domains) (Fisher, Bulger, & Smith, 2009). Several factors influence an individual's ability to achieve work-life balance. Organizational policies and practices, such as flexible work arrangements, parental leave policies, and telecommuting options, play a significant role in facilitating balance (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013). Additionally, individual coping strategies, including time management skills, social support, and personal resilience, are crucial in managing work-life demands (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011).

Leadership and organizational culture also significantly impact work-life balance. Supportive leadership behaviors, such as providing autonomy and acknowledging employees' non-work needs, have been found to promote better work-life balance (Hammer, Kossek, Anger, Bodner, & Zimmerman, 2011). Furthermore, a positive organizational culture that values **employee well-being** and encourages a balance between work and personal life is essential in fostering work-life balance (Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). Figure 1 explains Work-Life Balance in a simplified form with additional pictorial information in the appendix section:

Figure 1: Work-Life Balance



Source: Adopted from www.brackobit.com

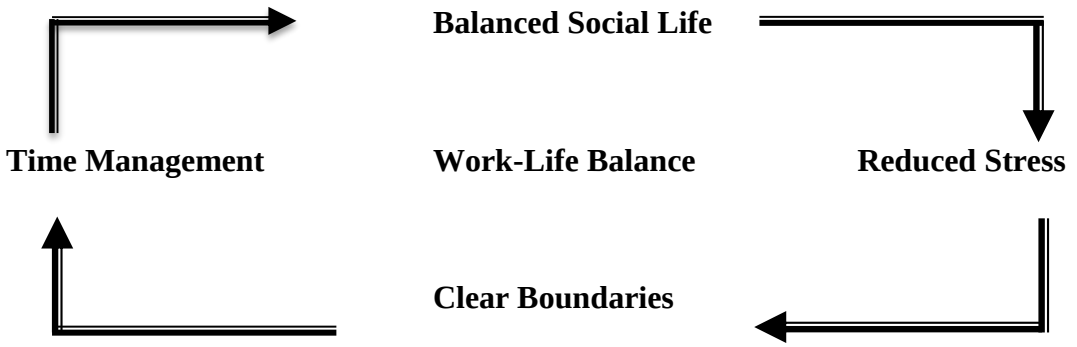
Benefits of Work-Life Balance

The impact of work-life balance on job satisfaction and employee performance has been a focal point in the literature. Numerous studies have established a positive correlation between work-life balance to job satisfaction and worker's or employees' well-being. For instance, Carlson, Grzywacz, and Zivnuska (2009) found that employees with higher work-life balance reported greater job satisfaction, employees' well-being and organizational commitment. Similarly, Haar, (2014) demonstrated that work-life balance positively affects job satisfaction and employees' well-being which in turn enhances employee performance. Work-life balance also influences employee performance through various mechanisms. Satisfied employees are more likely to exhibit higher levels of engagement, motivation, and productivity (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). Moreover, work-life balance reduces stress and burnout, which are significant factors that impair employee performance (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000). Employees who perceive a supportive work environment that promotes balance are less likely to experience turnover intentions, further contributing to organizational stability and performance (Wayne, Casper, Matthews, & Allen, 2013).

Walton (1985), a Harvard Business School professor popularized the framework of Quality of Work-Life, an important component of which was highlighted as integration of work and life space. He defined Work-Life Balance as a state of equilibrium in which the demands of both a person‟s job and personal life are equal. Theoretically, it can be understood in terms of Time Balance, Involvement balance and importantly Satisfaction balance. Time balance is about contributing equal time to work and family demands. Involvement balance refers to equal level of involvement at work and also in family while satisfaction derived from both work and life constitute satisfaction balance (Greenhaus, 2003). The concept of Work-Life balance is crucial as it emphasizes that

Individual's job and life are equally important for his/her well-being. Quality of life of an individual is said to be influenced by quality of work and visa-versa. Both are seen as two sides of the same coin. The following diagram illustrate our explanation further:

Figure II: A Quality Work-Life



Source: Adopted from www.brackobit.com

Job Satisfaction

Robbins and Judge, (2017) stated that job satisfaction is a feeling of someone positive about his job which is the result of an evaluation of the characteristics of the job. In another view, Gibson, Ivancevic, and Konopaske, (2012) explained that job satisfaction does not automatically increase productivity, although employee dissatisfaction tends to reduce productivity, cause more frequent avoidance of work, or cause work results to be of lower quality than satisfied employees. In other words, job satisfaction is a reaction to an employee's feelings about work or work experience, an employee feels whether or not there is a match between what is expected and what he gets for various things related to the work environment, work relationship, job security, reward, the job itself and so on (Zainal, Hadad, and Ramly, 2019). Relating it to reward, Aziri (2011) defined job satisfaction as "doing the work one likes, doing it well, and being rewarded for own efforts". This is the reason why Raziq and Maulabakhsh, (2015) assert that job satisfaction is an essential element in motivating employees and encouraging them to achieve better results. One of the most often cited definitions of job satisfaction is the one given by Spector (2017) according to whom job satisfaction has to do with the way people feel about their job and its various aspects. It has to do with the extent to which people like or dislike their job. That's why job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction can appear in any given work situation. Thus, from the description above it can be summarized that job satisfaction is a picture of positive feelings or a positive emotional condition psychologically from a person for his job, thus forming certain attitudes and behaviours of an employee towards work or organization according to what he feels.

Employee's Well-Being

Over the years, scientists have offered many definitions of employee well-being. The debate and divergence of opinion regarding the key factors that contribute to employee well-being indicate its multifaceted character. Page and Vella-Brodrick (2009) describe three elements that make up employee well-being: subjective well-being, defined as overall satisfaction with life; workplace well-being and; psychological well-being, which includes autonomy, self-acceptance, or purpose in life. In this sense, employee well-being is largely dependent on factors beyond the work space. Similarly, the Gallup Institute (2022) - the oldest polling institute in the world - has singled out five elements that affect employee well-being, i.e., social, financial, physical, and community well-being. We enjoy physical well-being when we feel strong, have the energy to do things, and do not feel pain or discomfort. Financial well-being means that we are satisfied with our earnings, we feel good and security, and it allows us to plan for the future. Professional well-being is achieved when we are satisfied with what we do and with the relationships, we have at work. Social well-being is about relationships with society and acting for the benefit of others.

On the other hand, Guest and Conway (2004) identify six aspects construct employee well-being. All of them encompass the employee's working sphere and are manageable within the organisation. These are adequate workload, employee control over work, good working relationships, team inclusion, a clearly defined role, and a sense of involvement in change decisions. Similarly, the PERMA model of well-being identifies five building blocks to consider: positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and achievement (Seligman, 2011). However, Donaldson, Heshmati, Lee, and Donaldson (2021) expanded this framework by adding relevant components - building blocks for work-related well-being. The PERMA + 4 framework also includes elements of physical health, mindset, work environment, and Economic Security elements, which makes the model fit better into the organisational context. Juniper (2011) defines employee well-being as "that part of the overall wellbeing that they perceive to be primarily determined by work and can be influenced by workplace interventions". This definition eliminates external factors and thus distinguishes between overall employee well-being and simply employee well-being. This definition has its opponents, because life situations and personal issues affect employees. On the other hand, employers do not have control over what happens after hours. The most important thing is to take responsibility for what they can do for their employees (Waida, 2021).

Empirical Review

Faisal, Hameed and Aleemi (2022) examined Work-Life Balance and Job Performance: A Mediating and Moderating Model. The study developed a model with four direct and two indirect hypotheses with questionnaire based on the past studies, containing five variables and 27 indicator variables. The study collected a sample of 433 responses from the private banks of Karachi non-randomly. For statistical analysis, we used the Smart PLS software. The study tested four direct and two indirect hypotheses, and we failed to reject all of them. The study found that work-life balance promotes job satisfaction and psychological well-being. And job satisfaction and psychological well-being are precursors of job performance. Psychological well-being mediates work-life balance and job performance. At the same time, the study found that intrinsic motivation moderates psychological well-being, work-life balance, and psychological well-being. Apart from other implications, we suggest that organizations develop policies on work-life balance, as it affects organizational performance and psychological well-being. Such policies may increase costs significantly. Thus, while developing such policies, organizations must also examine their sustainability and growth.

Okello and Kagendo (2024) assessed the influence of Work-Life Balance on employee work performance among middle level management public servants in public service in Kenya. The study adopted a survey and multiple linear regression research design. Pie charts are the graphic representations that provide visual insights into variable distribution, shape, and linkages. Data collection was done using a shared Google link questionnaire that was sent to all participants with the intention of obtaining data from at least 74 respondents. From the results above it was clear that the respondents stated that work-life balance had a positive influence on their productivity at work. The results from the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showed a significant statistical relationship between the overall performance at work, and work-life balance considered in the model. This is indicated by an F-value of 5.573 and a p-value of 0.002, at a 95% confidence level. The findings underscored the importance of work-life balance in enhancing employee performance in public service. The researchers recommended that public service should adopt policies aimed at aiding employees with the attainment of work-life balance.

Study Gap

i. **Gap in Methodology:** The aforementioned extant studies plus other previous studies not captured in this study mostly adopted the quantitative approach with the use of the questionnaire. The current study adopted the qualitative method (with in-depth data collection and analysis via interview and secondary data) as against the number crunching techniques.

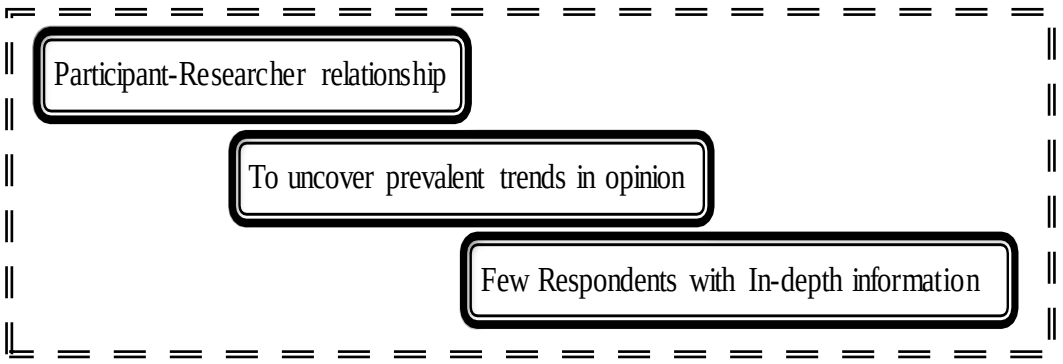
ii. The gap in Content: The extent studies examine the influence of Work-Life Balance on Employees' performance without breaking the criterion variable into job satisfaction and employees' well-being which is supposed to be the major focus – '**Work**' should relate to job satisfaction and '**Life'** – should relate to the wellbeing of the workers. This gap is filled by the current study.

Methodology

Research Design

This study was entirely qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is worked out under the use of observations, interviews, document reviews or combination of all. The main focus in qualitative research is to understand, explain, explore, discover and clarify situations, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs and experiences of a group of people (Kumar, 2005). The importance of qualitative research design is pictorised in figure III:

Fig. III: Unique Attributes of Qualitative Research Adoption



Source: deMarraise, 2016.

Population and Sampling of the Study

The target population for this study includes principal staff of CIT unit, including a staff of LMS training team. The study also comprised two (2) senior and two (2) junior staff of Faculty of Management and Social Sciences (since they run different programmes and utilise LMS as Work-Life Balance strategy). Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used in the course of this study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select principal staff of CIT unit, including a staff of LMS training team. The

rationale for the use of purposive sampling, lies on the need to recruit staff who provides additional in-depth and in-house information about the phenomenon under investigation. Snowball sampling technique played a second fiddle role in getting more information from important respondents that were hitherto left out when purposive sampling was used.

It is argued by Kumar (2011), that: the sample size in qualitative research does not play any substantial role as the purpose is to explore and describe in order to identify the spread of diversity and not its magnitude (Kumar, 2011). In another view, he proclaimed that – sample is inextricably related with survey, that, for the hardness of a researcher to reach out to a diverse population. Hence, the a need for a sample. The study sample size therefore, was **six (6)** respondents. The sample size was determined during the data collection phase at a time when we realized we had reached a point of data saturation.

Method of Data Collection

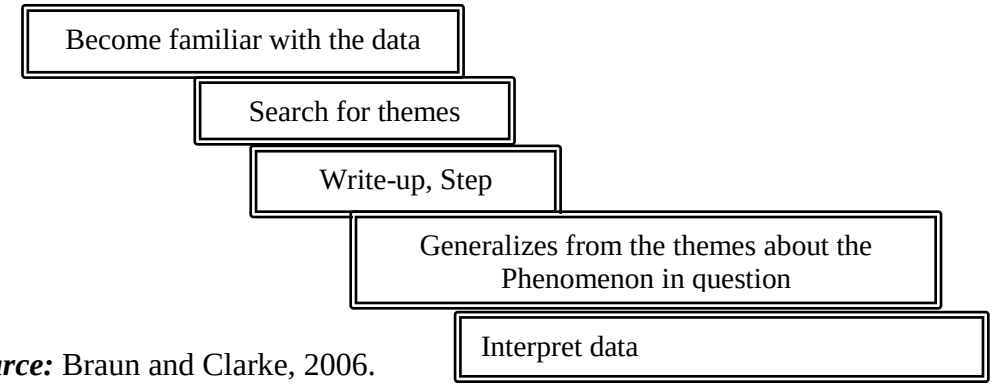
Interview: The main source of data is the interview (both face-to-face interview and online interviews – web-based interviews was conducted using online platforms like Google Meet, WhatsApp and Zoom). The web-based allowed us to conduct our study with anonymity.

Secondary Documents: Secondary data corroborated the data gotten from primary source. One important document relied on is Kwasu Learning Management System Platform User Guide **(D_1).**

Method of Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was adopted for the study. Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing data by putting similar responses in the same category (Kerlinger, 1986). He added that the goal of a thematic analysis is to identify themes, i.e. patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and use these themes to address the research questions. The rationale behind the choice of thematic analysis was that 'the approach can produce an insightful analysis that answers the research questions'. The study adapted the Clarke and Braun's (2006) 5-step framework as shown in figure IV:

Figure IV: Steps in Thematic Analysis



Source: Braun and Clarke, 2006.

Data Analysis

Analysis of Interview Responses Using Thematic Analysis

S/N	Position	Code	Date
1.	Senior Lecturer, Fac. Of Mgt and Soc. Sciences	**(R_1)**	24/07/2024
2.	Senior Lecturer, Fac. Of Mgt and Soc. Sciences	**(R_2)**	23/07/2024
3.	Junior Lecturer, Fac. Of Mgt and Soc. Sciences	**(R_3)**	24/07/2024
4.	Junior Lecturer, Fac. Of Mgt and Soc. Sciences	**(R_4)**	24/07/2024
5.	Staff of CIT, Kwara State University	**(R_5)**	23/07/2024
6.	Trainer, LMS	**(R_6)**	24/07/2024
7.		**(D_1)**	***

Source: Research Survey, 2024. ***Note:*** **R** = Respondent and **D** = Document

Results

Theme I: The influence of Work-Life Balance (WLB) as a strategy on job satisfaction in Kwara State University

According to the respondents, Kwasu as an academic environment, with the demands of teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities is overwhelming; Work-Life Balance is well-maintained in the University e.g. via Learning Management System and setting of CBT questions to reduce the work time. This allows employees to manage their professional obligations without sacrificing personal time. The respondents further stated that as the University employees have sufficient time to both their work and personal lives, they are more likely to experience higher levels of job satisfaction (R_1, R_2, R_3 and R_6).

More so, this balance in most cases leads to reduced stress, increased motivation, and a greater sense of fulfilment in their roles. Consequently, satisfied employees are more likely to be engaged and committed to their institution, fostering a positive academic culture that ultimately benefits students and the university community as a whole (R_4, R_5).

Theme II: The influence of Work-Life Balance (WLB) as a strategy on employees' well-being in Kwara State University.

The respondents unanimously agreed that promoting Work-Life Balance (WLB) as a strategy in Kwara State University is essential for enhancing employees' overall wellbeing. The respondents added that when staff are encouraged to integrate their personal and professional lives harmoniously, they experience lower levels of burnout and fatigue. This balance allows individuals to pursue interests outside of work, maintain social relationships, and prioritize self-care, all of which contribute to better mental and physical health. Furthermore, Kwara State Universities actively support Work-Life Balance through flexible scheduling, remote work options, and wellness programmes which demonstrate a commitment to their employees' wellbeing. This not only leads to healthier, happier employees but also creates a more supportive and inclusive university environment, which has improved retention rates and attract top talent to the institution (R_1, R_2, R_3, R_4, R_5 and R_6).

Discussion of Major Findings

The study examined the influence of Work-Life Balance as a strategy for improving job performance among academic staff of Kwara State University, Malete. From the presentation and analysis of data above, the study arrived at the following findings:

i. The study found that Work-Life Balance (WLB) as a strategy has influenced job satisfaction in Kwara State University. As the respondents unanimously stated that Work-Life Balance is well-maintained in the University e.g. via Learning Management System and setting of CBT questions allowing employees to manage their professional obligations without sacrificing personal time.

ii. The study found that Work-Life Balance (WLB) as a strategy has influenced employees' well-being in Kwara State University. As the respondents universally stated that Work-Life Balance allows individuals to pursue interests outside of work, maintain social relationships, and prioritize self-care, all of which contribute to better mental and physical health. Furthermore, Kwara State Universities actively support Work-Life Balance through flexible scheduling, remote work options, and wellness programmes which demonstrate a commitment to their employees' wellbeing.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, fostering a strong work-life balance within a university setting is vital for enhancing both job satisfaction and overall employee wellbeing. By recognizing the unique challenges faced by most University staff, institutions can create an environment that promotes flexibility and support, ultimately allowing employees to thrive both personally and professionally. A balanced approach not only leads to happier and more engaged employees but also contributes to a positive academic culture that benefits students and the entire University community. As universities strive for excellence in education and research, prioritizing Work-Life Balance will be essential in attracting and retaining dedicated talent, ensuring a sustainable and thriving academic environment for years to come. The study recommends: implementation of flexible work policies:

The university should introduce flexible work arrangements, such as remote work options or adjustable teaching schedules, to allow academic staff to better manage their professional and personal responsibilities. Also, develop and implement work-life integration initiatives, such as family-friendly policies, childcare support, and wellness programs, to address the diverse needs of employees and foster a supportive work environment. Adequate counselling services and regular well-being assessments for academic staff be provided, including workshops on stress management and work-life balance strategies should be organized to promote mental health awareness.

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