

BALANCING WORK STRESS AND PERSONAL LIFE AS ORGANIZATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY STRATEGY: A STUDY OF SELECTED BANK WORKERS IN ANAMBRA STATE.

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ABSTRACT

The organizational demands from workers and their personal lives place a lot of pressure on them. This situation does not allow sufficient production efficiency and workplace harmony. Against this background, the paper balancing work stress and personal life as organizational productivity strategy aimed at determining how work – life imbalance affects employees' productivity with a view to proffering strategies for increased productivity in organizations. Two hypotheses were formulated for the study. The descriptive survey design with a sample of 2`11 respondents drawn from selected commercial banks in Anambra state was used. The main tools for data analysis were product moment correlation coefficient and T – test statistic. All tests were done at 0.05 level of significance. The findings showed that the line between work hours and non works hours is blurred, creating personal conflicts and stress. This has serious negative implications on organizational productivity. The study recommended among others that organizations should reduce their high demands and expectations so that enough flexibility can be given to enable workers attend to other personal needs.

Keywords: *Work stress, Personal conflicts, Productivity, Work balance, Life expectancy.*

Introduction

The primary goal of every organization is to work towards achieving the objectives of its existence and the extent to which this goal can be achieved depends on the workforce.(Adeyemo and Ogunyemi 2007).Staff have to be happy and healthy in order to deliver efficiency gains and first rate services. (Bloom, Kretchmer and Reenen 2006).The trend now is for organization to do things faster, better, with less cost but with fewer people and the expected results are to get better performance, higher profits and further faster growth. (Noor 2008). While the organization's performance increases, stress, burnout, turnover, aggression, violence, family imbalance and other side effects can also occur. (Bornham – Carter 2003).

Aamir and Hira (2003) has observed that working style is changing at a very fast speed from what it was, to what it is now and this has become a subject of concern in many nations now. These researchers observed that majority of the population is experiencing economic hardship in this era and this has placed an extensive pressure on the earning hands.The anxiety level and demands of workers have also increased thereby making them to work a lot and for longer hours at the expense of their personal lives. As the workers do this, there is potential for conflict and stress to increase and they have to struggle with the demand of balancing paid work and home responsibilities.Stress can be a killer of productivity and a healthy workplace is crucial to any company's bottomline.(Tangri 2003).

Statement of Problem

The whole population of workers in Nigeria are being faced with many stress factors to cope with or manage.These factors include work related, domestic, after – job, age, or retirement problem. These factors are currently reducing their life span to the extent that the average life expectancy in this country is dropping everyday. (Ajala 2011). With many problems associated with stress, organizations would be wise to foster an environment that proactively engages individuals to reflect on their choices and priorities. Individuals who seek balance to maintain health and harmony may lead fuller and more productive lives, which could potentially benefit all aspects of society and business.

Objective of Study

The overall objective of this study is to examine the extent to which worklife balance policies and practices are actually a strategy for business survival.

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The specific objectives include;

1. To determine whether there is any relationship between stress and work life imbalance.
2. To determine whether work – life imbalance negatively affects employees' productivity in an organization.
3. To recommend work life balance strategies that will enhance employees' performance in an organization.

Statement of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H₀: There is no relationship between stress and work life imbalance for the employee in an organization

H₁: There is relationship between stress and work life imbalance for the employee in an organization

Hypothesis Two

H₀: There is no significant relationship between work life imbalance and employees' productivity in an organization.

H₁: There is significant relationship between work life imbalance and employees' productivity in an organization.

Theoretical Framework

The study has its theoretical base on the behavioural school which is a general term to describe the ways in which managers interact with their employees. A critical part of the behavioural school is the human relations movement championed by Elton Mayo and his associates. The human relations movement arose from early attempts to systematically discover the social and psychological factors that would create effective relations in organizations. Through series of experiments and studies, proponents of the behavioural school showed that productivity can be increased by optimizing the social system. As far as they were concerned, social factors were more important determinants of performance.

Brief Review of Related Literature

Selye (1956) as cited in Tangri (2003), identified two types of stress;

Bad Stress (Distress) and Good Stress (Eustress).

Bad stress can occur when an individual is being forced into a situation, cannot resolve a problem, does not have the resources to deal with the situation and / or has little or no control over the situation. Good stress is associated with situations where an individual feels challenged in a healthy way, has the resources to deal with these challenges, has some control and choices over the situation and has sufficient rest between the challenges.

This study discusses stress with particular reference to the bad stress as this is the type experienced by most people in Nigeria.

Alves, Chor, Faerstein and Werneck (2004), defines stress as a strain or anguish resulting from difficult situations.

Causes of Work Stress/ Personal Life Imbalance

In the past decade or so, the Nigerian family has undergone significant structural and functional changes that have not been accompanied by equally dramatic shifts in corporate policies. (Oluwole, Hammed and Awaebe 2011). It has also become experience that strict arrangements in relation to working schedules, inadequate regulations, strict supervision and lack of facilities like leave to take care of ill family members are common practice at work place which cause stress at work. (Guest 2001). Ugwu (2009), discovered that dual career Nigerian couples experienced great stress because of multiple demands from work, family, community and even the extended family.

Lehmkuhl 1999 in Oluwole et al (2011), expressed long working hours as one of the major causes of stress and personal life imbalance and this has negative direct consequences as well as causing other illnesses. Tangri (2003), has noted overtime to be one of the unhealthy expectations of many work places especially the banking sector.

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Organizations may appear to benefit from these added hours but they are actually sabotaging their long term performance. Other factors of stress among workers include; lower salaries, increased work load, market competition, poor management, peer support and behaviour, longer time frames at work, lack of acknowledgement, public dealing and higher targets, excessive use of computers. (Badar 2011).

Consequences of Work stress and Personal life Imbalance.

The disadvantages associated with work life Imbalance are numerous and impact both employee and employer. For the employee, consequences can have a negative impact on work and life satisfaction, on 3 1 being, mental health, physical health and on individual performance in organizations as identified by (Guest 2001). Aamir and Hira (2011), identified some of the symptoms of stress as follows; an increased metabolism, for example faster heart beat and quicker breathing, increased blood pressure, increased cholesterol and fatty acids in the bloodstream, decreased protein synthesis, impaired digestion, immune and allergic response systems, faster blood clotting and increased production of stomach acids.

Research Methodology**Design of the study**

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study.

Population of the study

The study populations were all the commercial banks in Awka capital city and environs, (Nnewi, Onitsha and Ekwulobia). Anambra state. The choice of banks was informed by the appropriateness of the banks staff in understanding the phenomenon under study. About 351 was estimated as the total number of senior staff for all the commercial banks in the area. The study considered 60% of 351 senior staff which constitutes the sample as adequate. Therefore, the number of employees chosen to represent the entire population was 211 senior staff.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling technique was used to facilitate the selection of only those who are designated as senior staff, into the sample. Population was divided into strata before selection was done from each stratum thereby giving every unit in the population of interest equal chance of being included in the sample (Nwabuokei, 2001:92).

Table 1: Commercial Banks studied with Number of Respondents selected from each Bank.

S/No	Banks	No of Respondents Selected
1.	First Bank Nigeria PLC	33
2.	United Bank for Africa (UBA)Plc	26
3.	Access Bank Plc	28
4.	Fidelity Bank Plc	21
5.	Union Bank Plc	25
6.	Zenith Bank Plc	27
7.	Eco Bank Plc	29
8.	Diamond Bank Plc	22
	Total	211

The number of respondents allocated to each bank was determined by the number of branches and the total senior employees the bank has within Awka capital city and the environs. This was done to achieve the desired balanced view from the respondents. Also, the choice of the banks listed above for the study was informed by the length of time the bank has been in operation within the study area.

Instrument for Data Collection

A 20 item structured questionnaire for determining relationships between stress, work life imbalance, and productivity of an employee in an organization, was used to collect data for the study.

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There were two sections in the instrument, sections A and B. while section A sought information on causes of work stress and their relationship with work – life imbalance, section B was on the relation between work – life imbalance and productivity. Response options were scaled to reflect the weight respondents attached to each item. Accordingly, strongly agree (SA) had 5 points, Agree (A) 4 points, undecided (Und) 3 points, Disagreed (D) 2 points and strongly disagreed (SD) 1 point.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The instrument was administered on the respondents by the researcher with the help of an assistant who had been briefed earlier on what to do. All the copies of the instrument issued out were retrieved without any case of non – response. The main tools used in analyzing data were product moment correlation coefficient and t- test statistic. All tests were done at 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation of Data and Analysis

Table 2: Perception of Respondents on Stress and Work – Life Imbalance

S/No	ITEM	Responses					TOTAL
		SA	A	UND	D	SD	
1.	Heavy work -load is a challenge to an employee and it makes him/her work harder with enthusiasm.	24	28	39	58	62	211
2.	Working longer hours in the office will surely reduce the time an employee was supposed to use for personal activities outside work.	54	75	21	33	28	211
3.	When an employee over extends his financial resources, he/she will be troubled and it can distract his attention from his work.	56	67	30	39	19	211
4.	Individual's basic disposition coupled with unfavourable working conditions can trigger stress in an employee.	61	72	24	32	22	211
5.	Company policies must recognize that workers also have responsibility to their families and friends to forestall stress in the work place.	75	69	18	20	29	211
6.	Performance related stress can be reduced when job assignment is accompanied by sufficient flexibility to accommodate employees' personal life demands.	82	74	11	23	21	211
7.	Dual – career couples should be assigned with less demanding jobs to reduce tendency for stress in their line of duty.	69	83	15	29	15	211
8	Non commensurate salary or wage will make employee not to cope with financial obligations both to immediate family and social activities thereby creating discomfort to him.	68	93	17	26	7	211
9.	Setting unachievable targets for the workers will end up denying them opportunity to attend to personal life commitment as well as having dead end efforts with increased tendency for stress.	74	88	15	23	11	211
10.	Dissatisfaction of employee arising from lack of job enrichment can spillover into the employee's personal life with stress being manifested	53	65	27	39	27	211
	Total	62	71	22	32	24	211

Table 3: Calculation of Correlation Coefficient

S/N	Response options	Points (X)	Aggregate Responses (Y)	XY	X ²	Y ²
1.	Strongly agree	5	62	310	25	3844
2.	Agree	4	71	284	16	5041
3.	Undecided	3	22	99	9	484
4.	Disagree	2	32	64	4	1024
5.	Strongly disagree	1	24	24	1	576
	Total	15	211	718	55	10,969

Source: Derived from Table 2.

The computation using Table 2 resulted in $r = 0.85$ (see Appendix I). This result shows that work – life imbalance is positively related to employees’ stress in the work place. The more the work-life imbalance, the more stressful the employee becomes as the high positive correlation coefficient has indicated. Nevertheless, there was a greater need to test further in order to justify the stated hypothesis. In doing this, test of significance using t- student test was employed.

Hypothesis One:

H₀: There is no relationship between stress and work – life imbalance for the employee in an organization.

H₁: There is a relationship between stress and work – life imbalance for the employee in an organization.

Test Procedure:

$$t_{cal} = r \sqrt{\frac{n-2}{1-r^2}}$$

Substituting the values,

$$\begin{aligned} t_{cal} &= 0.85 \sqrt{\frac{8-2}{1-(0.85)^2}} \\ &= 0.85 (4.6499) \\ &= 3.952 \end{aligned}$$

But $t_{8, 0.05} = 1.860$

And $t_{cal} = 3.952$.

Since $t_{cal} (3.952) > t_{crit} (1.860)$,

H₀ was rejected and the alternative hypothesis which suggests that work – life imbalance is directly related to employee stress in the work place was accepted.

Table 4: Respondents’Opinion Concerning Work – Life Imbalance and Productivity.

S/No	Item	Responses					Total
		SA	A	UND	D	SD	
1.	Moods and emotions of an employee can either be affected positively or negatively depending on the prevailing conditions in the work place, and it affects productivity.	39	58	25	37	52	211
2.	When an employee is in a bad mood or emotion, productivity tends to be reduced.	53	67	19	31	41	211
3.	Some roles/schedule of duty do not give employee room to attend to personal matters and this makes him/her unhappy which impacts negatively on performance.	68	77	23	29	14	211

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4.	Some employees will prefer jobs that give them time to attend social and other personal activities to job – security.	50	61	24	35	41	211
5.	Married employees as dual career couples are finding it difficult to fulfill commitments to home, spouse, children, parents and friends and this have negative implication for performance.	61	73	22	35	20	211
6.	Work – life imbalance can lead to dissatisfaction which will lead to many work place deviance with serious implications on productivity.	56	69	18	44	24	211
7.	Work – life imbalance can lead to high turnover rate in an organization.	40	53	16	52	50	211
8	Communication technology has contributed in no less measure to the blurring of the line between employees' work life and personal life.	58	66	25	37	25	211
4.	Organizations that don't help their people achieve work- life balance will find it increasingly difficult to attract and retain capable and motivated employees.	55	68	30	39	19	211
5.	Attaining a balance between personal life and work is a primary career goal which will enable employees be at their best.	61	82	17	23	28	211
	Total	54	67	22	36	32	2,110

Table 5: Calculation of Correlation Coefficient

S/No	Response Options	Points (X)	Aggregate Responses (Y)	XY	X ²	Y ²
1.	Strongly agree	5	54	270	25	2,916
2.	Agree	4	67	268	16	4,489
3.	Undecided	3	22	66	9	484
4.	Disagree	2	36	72	4	1,296
5.	Strongly disagree	1	32	32	1	1,024
	Total	15	211	708	55	10,209

Source: Derived from Table 4.

The computation using Table 4 showed that $r = 0.88$ (see Appendix 2). Thus showing that work – life imbalance influences productivity in an organization. Infact, the more imbalance an employee experiences in the workplace, the more unproductive he/she becomes. However, there was a need to carry out further verification in order to justify the stated hypothesis. In doing the test of significance, t – test statistic was employed.

Hypothesis Two:

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between work – life imbalance and employees' productivity in an organization.

H_1 : There is a significant relationship between work – life imbalance and employees' productivity in an organization.

African Journal of Management and Administration, Volume 6, Number 1, 2013**Test Procedure:**

$$t_{cal} = r \sqrt{\frac{n-2}{1-r^2}}$$

Substituting the values,

$$t_{cal} 0.88 = \sqrt{\frac{8-2}{1-(0.88)^2}}$$

$$= 0.88 (5.157)$$

$$= 4.540$$

$$\text{But } t_{8,0.05} = 1.860$$

$$\text{And } t_{cal} = 4.504$$

$$\text{Since } t_{cal} (4.504) > t_{crit} (1.860),$$

The null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative which suggests that work – life imbalance negatively influences employees' productivity in an organization was accepted.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The line between work hours and non – work hours has become blurred, creating personal conflicts and stress. As the study has revealed, some roles or schedules of duty are so demanding that the employees hardly have time to attend to personal needs. Employees want to keep their jobs as well as have time to attend to personal needs. To help employees balance the conflict is within the purview of the management.

The crises or conflicts that result from inability of the employees to attend to personal needs portends very dangerous work – environment for obvious reasons. It could lead to deviant workplace behavior. The workplace incivility on antisocial behaviour could be voluntary behaviour that violates significant organizational norms, and in doing so, threatens the well – being of the organization or its members with serious implications for productivity.

Such norms could be companies policies that prohibit certain behaviours considered to be dangerous to the achievement of the organization's goals. Such a dissatisfied employee could engage in acts capable of sabotaging the organization's efforts. Dissatisfaction is a negative feeling about one's job that results from an evaluation of its characteristics, all of which contribute significantly to low performance of the employee in the organization. Stress as a concept may not be completely bad as it is made to appear, however, when an employee is stressed up, the likelihood is that performance must be negatively affected as well as the employee's health. It is in the interest of the organization that employee maintains good health for continued good performance which contributes to the realization of the organizational goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

An organization that fails to improve work life imbalance of the employees is likely to experience poor performance, absenteeism, sick leave, higher staff turn over, recruitment and training costs, all of which impact negatively on the productivity of the organization. It is therefore necessary that organizations intervene by reducing expectations so that enough flexibility can be given to enable the workers attend to other personal needs.

Some days are identified as the social engagement days within the week. In the entire south – East zone, Thursday to Saturday are usually days of social activities such as burials, weddings, etc, therefore organizations can re- design the hours of work to reflect these busy days of social engagement to enable employees participate in such activities. Some days were also identified as very busy days in the office, such days as Monday to Wednesday are usually busy in every office whether public or private. The working hours of the busy days can be extended relatively to make up for the hours lost to social or personal activities. This was the practice in the banks before now.

Organizations should have special arrangement for nursing mothers such as on site baby care facilities to reduce man hour's losses which often occur. It is also necessary that employers improve on work environment to make it as enabling as possible because an unfriendly work environment re – enforces the stress that accompanies work – life conflict which lowers productivity in the organization and increases the chances of ill - health for the employee. For the Employees, they should create a conducive stress free working environment around themselves as much as it lies within their power. They should mix leisure with work. They should set realistic goals and constitute positive attitude towards any change in the organization.

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CONCLUSION

Every organization needs to adopt sustainable survival strategies. The well being of the employees constitutes a vital aspect of such strategy. It is of utmost importance that work stress and personal life be balanced in order to improve the productivity of organizations.

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APPENDIX I**The Product – Moment Coefficient of Correlation.**

If the relationship between X and Y is linear, a precise quantitative measure of the degree of correlation between the two variables is the product – moment coefficient of correlation. Designated by the letter, r, the product – moment coefficient of correlation is calculated by the formula:

$$r = \frac{n \sum xy - \sum x \sum y}{\sqrt{(n \sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2) - (n \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2)}}$$

$$= \frac{8(718) - (15)(211)}{\sqrt{(8(55) - (225)) (8(10,969) - (44521))}}$$

$$= \frac{5744 - 3165}{\sqrt{(440 - 225) - (87752 - 44521)}}$$

$$\frac{2579}{3048.7}$$

$$= 0.8459$$

$$\cong 0.85$$

APPENDIX 2

$$r = \frac{8(708) - (15)(211)}{\sqrt{(8(55) - (225)) (8(10,209) - (44521))}}$$

$$= \frac{5664 - 3165}{\sqrt{(440 - 225) - (81,672 - 44521)}}$$

$$= \frac{2499}{\sqrt{(215) - (37151)}}$$

$$\frac{2499}{2826.2} = 0.884, \cong 0.88$$