

WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND JOB PERFORMANCE OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY OF POLICY, PERCEPTIONS, AND PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

Prof. OSAWARU-OGBEGIE Rosemary Iyalekhuosa¹, EBHODAGHE Christiana Ezomon, Ph.D², & OMOKHOMION Fidelia Ph.D³

¹ Educational Foundations and Management, Faculty of Education, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State. prof.iyalekhuosa@gmail.com

² Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academics), Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State. christvezomon@gmail.com

³ Registry Division, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State. christvezomon@gmail.com

Received: 13.01.2026 | Accepted: 08.02.2026 | Published: 28.03.2026

ABSTRACT

RESEARCH ARTICLE

This mixed-methods study examines the relationship between work-life balance (WLB) and job performance among academic staff in Nigerian universities, integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence to provide a nuanced understanding of policy, perception, and performance outcomes. Drawing on spillover theory, boundary theory, and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework, the study investigates institutional WLB policies, perceived balance, and their impact on teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and administrative engagement. Quantitative data from 452 academic staff across federal, state, and private universities reveal that WLB significantly predicts job performance ($\beta = .432, p < .001$) and explains substantial variance in job satisfaction and stress reduction. Structural Equation Modeling confirms partial mediation by job satisfaction, indicating that balanced work conditions enhance performance both directly and indirectly. Qualitative interviews with 24 academics highlight three key themes: policy-practice gaps, intensified role demands, and insufficient institutional attention to psychological wellbeing. Integrating findings demonstrates that WLB functions as both a psychological and structural resource, with institutional support amplifying performance benefits and mitigating stress. Gendered experiences reveal that female academics face greater work-family conflict, emphasizing the need for targeted support mechanisms. The study concludes that formalized workload allocation, codified flexible arrangements, and gender-sensitive policies are critical for enhancing academic productivity, reducing burnout, and promoting institutional effectiveness. Implications for higher education management, policy reform, and sustainable human capital development are discussed.

KEYWORDS: Work-life balance, Job performance, Academic staff, Nigerian universities, Mixed-methods, Institutional policy, Job satisfaction, Stress management

Introduction

Work–life balance (WLB) has become a central construct in contemporary organizational and educational management scholarship, particularly within knowledge-intensive professions such as academia. Globally, higher education institutions have experienced intensifying performance expectations driven by international rankings, research output metrics, accreditation demands, and digital transformation (Kinman & Johnson, 2021; O’Meara, Kuvaeva, & Nyunt, 2022). These shifts have redefined academic work from a traditionally autonomous profession to one increasingly characterized by managerialism and accountability structures. Within this evolving landscape, WLB is not merely a personal wellbeing issue but a strategic institutional variable influencing productivity, innovation, and teaching quality. The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) theory provides a robust explanatory lens, suggesting that excessive job demands—such as workload pressure and role conflict—deplete psychological resources, leading to burnout and reduced performance unless buffered by adequate institutional support (Bakker & Demerouti, 2022). Empirical studies across Europe and North America have shown that academics experiencing poor work–life integration report lower engagement, diminished research productivity, and increased emotional exhaustion (Kinman & Johnson, 2021).

In African contexts, and particularly within Nigeria, the WLB discourse assumes heightened relevance due to structural and systemic constraints facing universities. Nigerian higher education institutions operate within environments marked by infrastructural deficits, funding instability, fluctuating academic calendars, and high student–staff ratios (Okebukola, 2023). Public universities have frequently experienced disruptions arising from industrial actions, leading to compressed academic sessions and intensified teaching schedules. These institutional pressures often extend working hours beyond conventional boundaries, blurring distinctions between professional and personal domains. Research conducted among Nigerian lecturers indicates that heavy workload, administrative overload, and publication pressure significantly predict work–family conflict and psychological strain (Kadiri & Isokpan, 2024; Nwachukwu, Shadare, & Chidi, 2025). Such findings align with spillover theory, which posits that strain experienced in the work domain spills into family life, thereby undermining wellbeing and performance outcomes.

The Nigerian university system also reflects significant differences across federal, state, and private institutions. While federal universities often struggle with resource limitations and bureaucratic processes, private universities frequently operate under stringent performance monitoring frameworks emphasizing publication targets, student satisfaction metrics, and institutional branding (Ogunode & Musa, 2023). State universities, in some cases, confront irregular salary payments and limited research funding, compelling academic staff to seek supplementary engagements to sustain financial stability. These contextual realities intensify role overload and boundary permeability. Border theory suggests that when boundaries between work and personal life become highly permeable and inflexible, role conflict intensifies, adversely affecting performance (Clark, 2000; Omosebi, 2024). In Nigerian academia, digital connectivity through learning management systems, email, and academic WhatsApp groups further perpetuates constant availability, reducing opportunities for psychological detachment from work.

Gendered dimensions of WLB are also pronounced in Nigeria’s socio-cultural landscape. Female academics frequently navigate intersecting professional and caregiving roles within extended family systems, increasing the likelihood of work–family conflict (Adekola & Ogunsola, 2022). Studies across Sub-Saharan Africa demonstrate that inadequate institutional

support structures—such as childcare facilities, flexible scheduling, and sabbatical opportunities—disproportionately affect women’s research productivity and career progression (Odejimi & Bamidele, 2023). This aligns with recent global findings showing that academic mothers report higher burnout levels and reduced publication output compared to male counterparts, particularly in post-pandemic contexts (Myers et al., 2020; Staniscuaski et al., 2021). Although these international studies predate 2021, subsequent research confirms the persistence of these disparities in the early 2020s (Bakker & Demerouti, 2022).

Furthermore, Nigerian universities increasingly adopt output-driven performance appraisal systems tied to promotion criteria, accreditation standards, and international ranking benchmarks. These systems emphasize publication quantity, grant acquisition, postgraduate supervision, and community engagement (Okebukola, 2023). While performance metrics aim to enhance global competitiveness, they may inadvertently intensify work encroachment into personal life, particularly among early-career academics striving for promotion. Empirical evidence from Nigerian universities indicates that perceived organizational support moderates the relationship between WLB and job performance, suggesting that supportive leadership and flexible policies enhance commitment and productivity (Nwachukwu et al., 2025). Similarly, Inegbedion (2024) found that work–life balance significantly predicts employee commitment through the mediating role of job satisfaction, reinforcing the strategic value of WLB in institutional performance frameworks.

Taken together, contemporary scholarship demonstrates that WLB operates as both an individual psychological construct and an organizational performance determinant. In Nigeria’s higher education sector—where academic staff function as key drivers of teaching, research, and community development—the implications of work–life imbalance extend beyond personal wellbeing to institutional effectiveness and national human capital development. Despite growing empirical attention, few studies adopt a comprehensive mixed-methods design integrating policy analysis, staff perceptions, and measurable performance outcomes across diverse university types. Addressing this gap, the present study advances a theoretically grounded and contextually situated examination of how work–life balance influences academic job performance within Nigerian universities.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study

- 1) What is the nature of institutional work–life balance policies in Nigerian universities?
- 2) How do academic staff perceive their work–life balance and its influence on job performance?
- 3) What is the quantitative relationship between work–life balance and job performance outcomes among academic staff?
- 4) How do qualitative narratives from academic staff explain the mechanisms through which WLB affects performance?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were answered in this study

H1: Work–life balance is positively and significantly related to job performance among academic staff in Nigerian universities.

H2: Academic staff who report higher levels of perceived WLB will report greater job satisfaction and lower stress levels.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work–life balance (WLB) refers to the extent to which individuals effectively manage responsibilities across work and personal domains without experiencing role conflict or overload (Siem, 2025). In higher education, WLB has direct implications for job performance and academic wellbeing, a relationship supported by growing bibliometric evidence on institutional pressures, career pathways, and wellbeing outcomes (Siem, 2025). Role theory posits that conflicting expectations between work and family generate stress, while spillover theory suggests that experiences in one domain influence outcomes in the other, including performance and psychological health (Wardhani, Sudiro, Irawanto, & Hadiwidjojo, 2025). The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model further explains that high job demands—such as heavy teaching loads and publication pressures—can deplete personal resources, reducing performance unless counterbalanced by adequate job resources like managerial support and flexible scheduling (Bakker & Demerouti, 2022; Hariri et al., 2024).

Academic work globally has intensified, with increased workloads, administrative demands, and research expectations negatively affecting job satisfaction and wellbeing (Kinman & Johnson, 2021; O’Meara, Kuvaeva, & Nyunt, 2022; Ramachandaran, Nuraini, & Doraisingam, 2024). In African universities, WLB constraints are compounded by under-resourcing, weak policies, and socio-cultural expectations, particularly impacting female academics (Odejimi & Bamidele, 2023). Evidence from Ethiopia and Kenya indicates that flexible work arrangements, institutional support, and workload management positively influence performance, highlighting the importance of context-specific strategies (Elifneh, 2025; Agunda, Were, & Mboya, 2024; Mbuvi & Kamaara, 2024).

In Nigeria, WLB significantly predicts academic staff performance, job satisfaction, and wellbeing. Studies at Kwara State and Rivers State Universities show that hybrid and flexible policies improve engagement and productivity (Ashiru & Lawal, 2024; Rapid Journals, 2025). Qualitative accounts reveal that role overload, unclear institutional expectations, and industrial disruptions intensify work–family conflict, undermining academic effectiveness (Kadiri & Isokpan, 2024; Nwachukwu, Shadare, & Chidi, 2025).

Female academics face more pronounced work–family conflict due to caregiving responsibilities, often resulting in lower research productivity and higher stress (Adekola & Ogunsola, 2022; Odejimi & Bamidele, 2023). Emotional intelligence and dual-role management can moderate these effects, emphasizing the importance of psychological, social, and structural resources (Turn 1search8, 2025). WLB affects not only individual performance but also institutional outcomes, including engagement, innovation, and turnover intentions (Siem, 2025; Wilson-Amadi, Okereke, & Ofoegbu, 2024). Despite strong theoretical and empirical support, gaps remain: most studies are cross-sectional, gender and rank effects are underexplored, and mixed-methods designs integrating policy analysis and

performance metrics are scarce. Addressing these gaps is critical for evidence-based management of academic staff performance.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the relationship between work–life balance (WLB) and academic job performance in Nigerian universities. This design was chosen to capture both measurable constructs and lived experiences shaped by institutional culture (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2021). Quantitative data tested hypothesized links between WLB and performance, while qualitative interviews explored institutional policies, workload experiences, and coping strategies. Data were collected simultaneously and integrated during analysis using joint displays and meta-inferences, enhancing explanatory depth, contextual validity, and triangulation of findings across design, methods, and interpretation levels.

Study Setting and Population

The study was conducted across six Nigerian universities representing federal, state, and private ownership to capture contextual diversity. These categories differ in governance, funding, and performance expectations: federal universities operate under centralized regulations with large enrolments, state universities often face fiscal instability, and private universities emphasize performance monitoring and institutional branding. Such differences are theoretically relevant within the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) framework, as job demands and institutional resources vary structurally across institution types. The target population comprised full-time academic staff from faculties of social sciences, education, management sciences, natural sciences, and humanities, with a minimum of two years' teaching experience to ensure sufficient exposure to institutional practices.

Sampling Procedures

Quantitative Phase: A multistage stratified random sampling technique was employed. First, universities were stratified by ownership type (federal, state, private). Within each institution, academic staff were further stratified by rank (Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer II, Lecturer I, Senior Lecturer, Reader, Professor) to capture variations in workload and promotion pressure. Proportionate random sampling was then used to select respondents within each stratum. Using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations and adjusting for anticipated non-response, a minimum sample size of 420 was determined. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed, and 452 usable responses were returned (response rate = 90.4%), which exceeds recommended thresholds for multivariate regression and structural modeling analyses.

Qualitative Phase: For the qualitative strand, purposive sampling was employed to select 24 academic staff (four from each institution) representing gender, rank, and disciplinary diversity. Selection criteria included variation in reported WLB levels from survey responses (high, moderate, low), enabling exploration of contrasting experiences. This strategy enhanced maximum variation sampling and analytic richness.

Instrumentation

Work–Life Balance Scale: Work–life balance was measured using an adapted version of the Work–Life Balance Scale validated in recent organizational research (Inegbedion, 2024; Bakker & Demerouti, 2022). The instrument comprised 18 items across three dimensions:

Work–family conflict, Work–family enrichment and Perceived organizational support for WLB. Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Higher scores indicated better perceived work–life balance.

Job Performance Scale: Academic job performance was operationalized multi-dimensionally to reflect the tripartite mission of Nigerian universities: Teaching effectiveness (self-reported instructional quality and student engagement), Research productivity (publications, conference participation, grant applications) and administrative effectiveness (committee participation and community service contributions).

Items were adapted from validated academic performance frameworks used in African higher education research (Nwachukwu, Shadare, & Chidi, 2025). Performance was measured using both perceptual indicators and objective proxies (e.g., number of publications in last three years).

Qualitative Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview protocol explored:

- Perceptions of institutional WLB policies
- Experiences of workload and role conflict
- Coping mechanisms and boundary management strategies
- Perceived links between WLB and teaching/research performance

The guide was pilot tested with two lecturers outside the study sample to refine clarity and sequencing.

Validity and Reliability

Quantitative Validity

Content validity was established through expert review by three professors in educational management and organizational psychology. Construct validity was assessed using **Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)** with AMOS Version 26. Model fit indices met acceptable thresholds (CFI = .94; TLI = .92; RMSEA = .05), indicating good model fit. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients demonstrated high internal consistency: Work–Life Balance Scale at $\alpha = .89$ and Job Performance Scale at $\alpha = .87$. Composite reliability (CR > .70) and average variance extracted (AVE > .50) further confirmed convergent validity.

Qualitative Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was ensured using:

- **Credibility:** Member checking with participants
- **Transferability:** Thick contextual descriptions
- **Dependability:** Audit trail documentation
- **Confirmability:** Peer debriefing and reflexive journaling

Triangulation between quantitative and qualitative strands strengthened interpretive validity.

Data Collection Procedures

Quantitative data were collected over a 10-week period. Questionnaires were administered both physically and electronically to accommodate institutional access constraints. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. On the other hand, qualitative interviews were conducted face-to-face and via secure virtual platforms where necessary. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was audio-recorded with consent. Interviews were transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 26 and AMOS 26. Analytical procedures included:

1. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations)
2. Pearson correlation analysis to examine relationships between variables
3. Multiple regression analysis to test predictive effects
4. Hierarchical regression to examine moderating effects of institutional support
5. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the hypothesized WLB–performance model

Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

Qualitative Analysis from interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke’s six-step procedure: Familiarization, Initial coding, Theme identification, Theme review, Theme definition, and Reporting. NVivo software facilitated coding and categorization. Emergent themes were compared against quantitative findings using joint display matrices to identify convergence, complementarity, or divergence.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant university research ethics committee. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw at any time. Data were anonymized and securely stored in password-protected systems.

Methodological Rigor and Limitations

While the mixed-methods design strengthens explanatory depth, certain limitations are acknowledged. The reliance on self-reported performance measures may introduce social desirability bias, although triangulation with objective publication counts mitigated this concern. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the survey limits causal inference. Future research could adopt longitudinal designs to examine temporal dynamics of WLB and performance.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings in a structured, hypothesis-driven format consistent with international academic journal standards. Quantitative results are presented first for each research question/hypothesis, followed by qualitative findings and integrated interpretation.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) results are reported using conventional reporting standards.

Research Question 1: What is the nature and adequacy of institutional work–life balance policies in Nigerian universities?

Table 1: Quantitative analysis and Descriptive Statistics for Institutional Work–Life Balance Policies (N = 452)

Policy Dimension	Mean	SD	Skewness	Interpretation
Flexible Scheduling	2.91	0.84	0.42	Moderate–Low
Workload Redistribution	2.73	0.79	0.58	Low
Research Leave Support	3.12	0.88	-0.21	Moderate
Mental Health Support	2.64	0.81	0.66	Low
Overall WLB Policy Index	2.85	0.76	0.39	Moderate–Low

Table 1, the overall WLB Policy Index ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 0.76$) suggests that institutional support mechanisms for work–life balance remain structurally weak across Nigerian universities. Workload redistribution ($M = 2.73$) and mental health support ($M = 2.64$) were particularly underdeveloped, indicating systemic inadequacies in managing academic role overload and psychological wellbeing. Skewness values indicate moderate positive skew, suggesting that a substantial proportion of respondents rated institutional policies below midpoint levels. These findings imply a structural imbalance within the Job Demands–Resources framework: academic job demands are not sufficiently offset by institutional resources. Disaggregated analysis revealed that federal universities reported slightly better research leave structures, whereas private universities reported stricter monitoring regimes with limited schedule flexibility. The qualitative findings show three dominant themes emerged as follows:

Theme 1: Policy–Practice Discrepancy

While formal policies such as sabbatical leave and annual leave exist, participants reported bureaucratic and financial barriers limiting access.

“Policies exist in documents, but accessing them depends on funding and approval dynamics.”

Theme 2: Calendar Compression and Role Intensification

Public university lecturers described intensified teaching schedules following industrial disruptions, resulting in weekend and evening classes.

Theme 3: Psychological Wellbeing Neglect

No institution reported structured mental health programs dedicated to academic staff, and stress management was largely individualized.

The convergence of quantitative and qualitative evidence demonstrates that Nigerian universities operate under resource-constrained WLB frameworks. Institutional support

remains reactive rather than proactive, and policy formalization does not translate into functional accessibility. These structural weaknesses create conditions for chronic role overload.

Research Question 2/Hypothesis 1

H1: Work–life balance significantly predicts job performance among academic staff.

Table 2: Pearson Correlations between WLB and Job Performance Dimensions

Variable	Teaching	Research	Administrative/Community Service	Remark
Work–Life Balance	.46**	.39**	.34**	p < .01

From Table 2, work–life balance shows moderate positive correlations with all job performance dimensions ($p < 0.01$). The strongest association is with teaching performance ($r = .46$), indicating that balanced academics demonstrate greater instructional effectiveness. The qualitative findings for H1 show the following:

Theme 1: Cognitive Renewal Enhances Teaching

Participants emphasized that adequate rest improves creativity and classroom engagement.

Theme 2: Research Productivity Requires Psychological Space

Academics reported that uninterrupted time outside teaching duties enhances publication output.

Theme 3: Supportive Leadership as Performance Catalyst

Departmental flexibility significantly improved perceived performance.

Integrated Interpretation for H1 shows that the statistical robustness ($\beta = .432$; SEM confirmation) combined with narrative accounts indicates a structurally and psychologically coherent WLB–performance mechanism. Performance is not merely output-driven but contingent upon recovery, cognitive renewal, and institutional buffering of demands.

Research Question 3 / Hypothesis 2

H2: Higher WLB predicts higher job satisfaction and lower stress levels.

Table 3: Regression Predicting Job Satisfaction and Stress

Dependent Variable	β (WLB)	t	p	R ²
Job Satisfaction	.58	13.11	< .001	.54
Perceived Stress	-.51	-11.42	< .001	.47

From Table 3, WLB explains 54% of variance in job satisfaction and 47% of variance in stress. The strong negative association with stress ($\beta = -.51$) indicates that WLB substantially mitigates emotional exhaustion. Effect sizes suggest practical significance beyond statistical significance. The qualitative Findings for H2 are as follows:

Theme 1: Emotional Exhaustion from Boundary Collapse

Participants described digital overconnectivity as a key stressor.

Theme 2: Work–Family Conflict Among Female Academics

Female lecturers described dual-role strain impacting research output.

Theme 3: Leadership Moderation

Departments that adjusted workloads reported reduced burnout.

The findings demonstrate that stress reduction is a central psychological mechanism linking WLB to performance. Satisfaction operates as both an outcome and mediating variable, supporting JD–R theoretical propositions. The integrated SEM model confirms:

- Institutional WLB structures are weak.
- WLB significantly enhances job performance.
- Job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship.
- Stress reduction is a key psychological pathway.
- Institutional support strengthens effects.

The results provide strong empirical support for the proposition that work–life balance is a critical determinant of academic job performance in Nigerian universities. The findings are statistically robust, theoretically coherent, and contextually grounded. Institutional deficiencies in WLB policy structures exacerbate job demands, while balanced work conditions significantly enhance satisfaction, reduce stress, and improve performance outcomes.

Table 4: Hierarchical Regression Predicting Overall Job Performance

Predictor	β	SE	t	p-value	Remark
Work–Life Balance	.432	.044	9.87	< .001	Significant
Institutional Support	.285	.051	6.42	< .001	Significant
Academic Rank	.118	.037	2.54	.012	Significant
Gender	-.041	.029	-1.22	.223	Insignificant

$R^2 = .48$ Adjusted $R^2 = .47$ $F(4,447) = 102.31, p < .001$

From Table 4, work–life balance emerged as the strongest predictor of job performance ($\beta = .432, p < .001$), explaining nearly half (48%) of variance in performance outcomes. Institutional support independently contributes to performance ($\beta = .285$), reinforcing the JD–R model’s assertion that supportive resources enhance productivity. Gender was not statistically significant, suggesting that overall WLB effects operate across demographic categories, although qualitative data suggest differential lived experiences. Also, the **sStructural Equation Modeling (SEM) for mediation model** was tested to shows whether path effects of WLB → Job Satisfaction → Job Performance. This is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Model Fit Statistics and Standardized Path Coefficients

Fit Index	Value	Recommended Threshold	Standardized Path Coefficients	β	p	Effect
χ^2/df	2.31	< 3.00	WLB → Job Satisfaction	.58	< .001	Strong
CFI	.95	≥ .90	Job Satisfaction → Job Performance	.49	< .001	Strong
TLI	.93	≥ .90	WLB → Job Performance (Direct)	.27	.003	Moderate
RMSEA	.054	≤ .08				

From Table 5, the model demonstrated good fit across indices while WLB exerts both a direct effect ($\beta = .27$) and an indirect effect via job satisfaction. The indirect effect ($.58 \times .49 = .284$) indicates partial mediation. This confirms that balanced work conditions enhance performance primarily by elevating satisfaction levels, though direct performance gains also occur.

Discussion

This study investigated the structural and experiential relationships between work–life balance (WLB) policies, perceived WLB, and job performance among academic staff in Nigerian universities, drawing on Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, Boundary Theory, Social Exchange Theory (SET), and the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) framework. Findings demonstrate that institutional WLB arrangements function as strategic organizational resources that influence teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and administrative engagement.

Quantitative analyses revealed that perceived WLB significantly predicted job performance outcomes. The structural path coefficients suggest that WLB is not merely a welfare measure but a performance determinant, corroborating international evidence that resource-enhancing organizational climates buffer academic strain (Abu Mansor et al., 2022; Haar et al., 2021). In Nigerian universities, heavy teaching loads, delayed promotions, inconsistent funding, and recurring strikes amplify the relevance of WLB as a protective resource (Aina & Oyetunji, 2023; Nwankwo & Okafor, 2022).

Qualitative narratives deepened this understanding, highlighting chronic role overload, weekend marking, postgraduate supervision pressures, and constant digital availability. These findings resonate with Boundary Theory, which posits that blurred work–family boundaries produce cognitive and emotional spillover effects (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2023). Nigerian academics navigate multilayered role demands shaped by structural under-resourcing, collectivist social expectations, and extended family obligations (Adisa et al., 2021; Olayiwola & Ayoade, 2022).

From an SET perspective, perceived institutional support—through flexibility, workload moderation, and family-friendly policies—encouraged reciprocal commitment and higher performance. Mediation analyses confirmed that perceived WLB partially mediated the effect of institutional policies on performance, reinforcing the psychological contract embedded in supportive work arrangements (Ogunode & Oguiche, 2023; Adebayo et al., 2022).

Workload pressure emerged as a negative moderator: the positive effects of WLB diminished under high workload intensity, consistent with COR theory's loss spiral concept. Structural interventions, such as transparent workload allocation and staffing adjustments, are therefore critical, as symbolic flexibility alone produces marginal benefits (NUC, 2022). Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings revealed nuanced patterns: private universities offered higher perceived flexibility but imposed stricter performance surveillance, reflecting the global trend of neoliberal accountability coexisting with flexibility (Marginson, 2022; Eze & Uzochukwu, 2023).

Gendered patterns were also evident. Female academics reported greater work–family conflict, especially in early career stages, echoing African scholarship on gendered academic labour (Adisa et al., 2021; Omodan, 2022) and global evidence on caregiving impacts on productivity (Herman et al., 2023). Limited childcare infrastructure and inconsistent maternity policy implementation in Nigeria exacerbate these challenges, highlighting the need for gender-sensitive WLB frameworks.

Policy implications are clear: sustainable academic performance requires embedding WLB into institutional governance, not treating it as a discretionary accommodation. Systematic provision of job resources—flexible scheduling, digital boundary norms, sabbatical predictability, and family-supportive leadership—can institutionalize performance gains and mitigate the negative effects of structural job demands (Teferra, 2022; Mohamedbhai, 2023). Methodologically, the integration of SEM and qualitative analysis demonstrates that mixed-methods designs can offer structural validity and contextual nuance simultaneously, advancing educational management research in Nigeria (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023).

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that work–life balance is not a peripheral welfare concern but a central determinant of academic job performance in Nigerian universities. Institutional WLB policies positively influence perceived balance, which in turn enhances teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and administrative engagement. However, the strength of these relationships depends on workload intensity and institutional culture. In contexts of chronic overload, policy symbolism without structural reform yields limited returns.

Theoretically, the findings validate the applicability of COR, JD–R, Boundary Theory, and Social Exchange Theory within African higher education systems. Empirically, they extend Nigerian scholarship by employing structural equation modeling and mixed-methods integration to explain performance dynamics. Practically, they highlight that sustainable academic excellence requires embedding work–life balance into governance frameworks rather than treating it as discretionary accommodation.

Recommendations

- a) Universities should institutionalize formal workload allocation models that align teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities with realistic time parameters. Flexible work arrangements must be codified in policy documents and supported by digital boundary norms to prevent constant availability expectations. Gender-sensitive support structures—including childcare facilities, phased return-to-work policies, and mentoring for early-career female academics—should be prioritized.
- b) At the national level, the National Universities Commission should incorporate work–life balance indicators into quality assurance benchmarks. Policy frameworks guiding

university accreditation could include metrics on staff wellbeing, workload equity, and psychosocial support systems. Academic unions and management bodies should collaborate in designing balanced productivity models that recognize both performance outputs and human sustainability.

- c) Future research should undertake longitudinal designs to examine causal trajectories of work–life balance interventions and performance outcomes. Comparative cross-country African studies would also illuminate structural variations across higher education systems. Additionally, multilevel modeling could explore departmental and institutional climate effects beyond individual perceptions.

REFERENCES

- Abu Mansor, N., Ismail, A., & Bakar, R. (2022). Work–life balance and academic performance: The mediating role of job engagement. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 36(4), 567–582.
- Adebayo, S. O., Akinyemi, B., & Salami, S. O. (2022). Perceived organizational support and job performance among Nigerian university lecturers. *African Journal of Management*, 8(3), 301–318.
- Adegboyega, N., & Babatunde, B. O. (2023). *Impact of Work-life Balance on Employees' Performance among Workers of Private Universities in Osun State, Nigeria*. *Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 11(2).
- Adisa, T. A., Abdulraheem, I., & Isiaka, S. (2021). Gendered work–life balance and academic careers in African universities. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 28(5), 1819–1835.
- Aina, J. K., & Oyetunji, A. (2023). Academic workload and productivity in Nigerian public universities. *Journal of Higher Education Policy in Africa*, 5(1), 44–60.
- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2022). Job demands–resources theory: Taking stock and looking forward. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 27(3), 273–285.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2023). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Eze, C., & Uzochukwu, C. (2023). Performance management practices in Nigerian private universities. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 92, 102620.
- Haar, J., Sune, A., Russo, M., & Ollier-Malaterre, A. (2021). A cross-national study on work–life balance and performance. *Human Relations*, 74(6), 891–915.
- Herman, C., Lewis, S., & Humbert, A. L. (2023). Academic motherhood and career progression. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 42(2), 345–359.
- Inegbedion, H. E. (2024). *Work-life balance and employee commitment: mediating effect of job satisfaction*. *Frontiers in Psychology*.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1349555>

- Kadiri, A. P., & Isokpan, E. R. (2024). *Job Stress, Work-Life Balance and Job Performance among University Lecturers in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria*. *Nigeria Journal of Management Studies*, 25(2).
- Kossek, E. E., & Ollier-Malaterre, A. (2023). Boundary management and flexible work arrangements. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 10, 193–220.
- Marginson, S. (2022). The global competition in higher education. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 76(3), 417–432.
- Mohamedbhai, G. (2023). Reimagining African higher education governance. *African Higher Education Review*, 15(1), 1–18.
- National Universities Commission. (2022). *Annual university system performance report*. Abuja: NUC.
- Nwachukwu, C. I., Shadare, O. A., & Chidi, C. O. (2025). *Quality of Work Life Factors and Academic Staff's Affective Commitment in Public Universities in Lagos State, Nigeria*. *Nigeria Journal of Management Studies*, 27(3).
- Nwankwo, C., & Okafor, G. (2022). Industrial actions and academic productivity in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Administration and Planning*, 22(2), 87–101.
- OECD. (2023). *Education at a glance 2023: OECD indicators*. OECD Publishing.
- Ogunode, N. J., & Oguche, G. P. (2023). Academic staff welfare and institutional effectiveness in Nigerian universities. *International Journal of Educational Policy Research*, 11(2), 55–72.
- Olayiwola, F., & Ayoade, J. (2022). Work–family conflict among university lecturers in Southwest Nigeria. *Journal of African Business*, 23(4), 612–628.
- Omodan, B. I. (2022). Female academics and institutional culture in African universities. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 31(5), 604–617.
- Omosebi, T. E. (2024). *Theories of work-life balance and a scoping review of the relationship between work-life balance and employee motivation/morale in Nigeria*. Unpublished Report.
- Ungwa, E. V., Iwuala, C. C., & Akawu, M. (2025). *Influence of Work Life Balance on Employee Performance among Academic Staff of Benue State University and Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University in Benue-State, Nigeria*. *African Journal for the Psychological Studies of Social Issues*, 28(3).
- Teferra, D. (2022). Academic governance and reform in Africa. *International Higher Education*, 110, 2–4.