Original Research Article

Impact of COVID-19 on Work-Life Balance and Productivity of Lecturers in Private Universities in Nigeria

Kanelechi Ck Nwangwa, Phd[*]

Associate Professor of Educational Management and Planning, Clifford University, Owerrinta, Abia State, Nigeria

Abstract

This study examines the impact of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on the work-life balance of lecturers in private universities in Nigeria. The objective was to determine the extent, to which COVID-19 affected the productivity of lecturers with reference to research and teaching output between March and October, 2020. The target population involves all academic staff of private universities in Nigeria. Purposive sampling of non-probability method was used to select eight (8) private universities in Lagos State and Federal Capital Territory Abuja while Taro Yamane formula n= N/(1+N (e) 2) was used to calculate the number of participants in the study. A self-constructed survey was developed and distributed online through Google Forms. Descriptive statistics with frequency distribution was used to analyse the demography of participants while linear regression was used to analyse responses from the survey. Based on the results, it was discovered that COVID-19 increased the family commitment and childcare practices of lecturers. Simultaneously, it exerted pressure on the lecturer to meet-up with online class activities, project supervision and research work. It was also observed that while the workload hours significantly decreased, the pressure to teach students through online applications (i.e Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, etc) was very high with less productivity. The findings also indicate that lecturers in private universities could not effectively strike a balance between work and family during the global pandemic and therefore, were less productive especially in the areas of research and teaching output. Recommendations were made towards development of new work-life balance policies by the university management as well as retraining of lecturers in meeting up with the emerging needs of students and the university in a post COVID-19 world.

Keywords: Covid-19, Work-Life, online class, Google Classroom.

INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of coronavirus disease in November 2019 (Covid-19), which originated from severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infection (Adegboye, Adekunle & Gayawan, 2020), is a public health emergency that was classified as global pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2020. COVID-19 initially started in Wuhan, China, and spread to 215 countries and territories with 35.5 million people infected and over 1 million deaths (Statista, 2020). COVID-19 patients suffer from dry cough, malaise, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, sore throat to severe health problems such as grasping for breath, respiratory distress and death (Nishiura et al., 2020). The first case of COVID-19 in Nigeria was detected on 27 February 2020, which has progressively risen to 59,345 confirmed cases, 50,768 recovery, 7,464 active cases and 1,113 deaths (NCDC, October 6, 2020). In order to mitigate against the spread of COVID-19 in Nigeria, the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19, instituted measures that includes establishment of isolation centres, ban on international flights, closure of schools and religious centres, and socio-economic lockdown in many states of the federation (Reuben et al., 2020).

Closure of schools came with its own consequences for the school owners, management, academic and non-staff, students, parents and the larger society. While government owned universities in Nigeria, with the exception of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) were on nationwide strike during the period under study, private universities in Nigeria continued businesses virtually. In fact, the BBC Pidgin reported that almost all the private universities actively conducted admission of new students during this period (BBC Pidgin, Sept 4, 2020).

Citation: Kanelechi Ck Nwangwa (2021). Impact of COVID-19 on Work-Life Balance and Productivity of Lecturers in Private Universities in Nigeria. *J Adv Educ Philos, 5*(5): 120-124.

120

According to Adeoye, Adanikin & Adanikin (2020), many of these private universities held virtual meetings, trained their staff and made their lecturers to teach using variety of online platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Classroom. While recent studies have revealed a similar pattern on the negative impact of COVID-19 on higher education (Ogunode, Abigeal & Lydia, 2020; Sahu, 2020; Toquero, 2020), there is need to scale up research into the impact of COVID-19 on work-life balance and productivity of lecturers in private universities in Nigeria.

Defining Work-Life Balance

The term work-life balance is a catchphrase that describe the method that an individual uses to joggle between performing his/her duties at work and simultaneously, carrying out family responsibilities (Nwagbara, 2020). The historical use of the term, 'work-life' is traced to the period of Industrial Revolution in the 1800s when men and women became attracted to industrial jobs and urban lifestyle. During this period, the typical hours for an employee to work in a manufacturing company in a day was 12-16 hours and must be carried out 6 days in a week (Weber, 2020). Trade unions were later formed to fight for the reduction in work hours and improve the welfare of workers. Subsequently, manufacturing and labour laws were enacted in many countries to provide for shorter workdays, shorter hours, improved working conditions and higher wages. Thus, the term 'work-life' is rooted in labour history and was first used in the 1930s by American workers to interpret the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 that reduced the workhour from 100 hour a week to 40 hours a week (Raja & Stein, 2014). By the 1980s, Women's Liberation Movement popularized the idea of 'work-life balance' which required more benefits for women in their place of work because, unlike men, they combine the role of raising children with going to work (Messenger, 2019).

In academic circle, the actual meaning of 'work-life balance' is characteristically universal as they all point towards establishing an equilibrium between work (career, ambition, occupation, profession) and life (family, personal development, health, leisure and pleasure). According to Swarnalatha & Rajalakshmi (2017), define work-life balance as the equilibrium between responsibilities at work and responsibilities outside of paid work. The central point in this definition is that work-life balance ensures that the paid work does not encroach on the time needed for other responsibilities. In another definition of work-life balance, Khaled (2019) sees work-life balance as the employee's time-sharing ratio between taking care of the family and the demands of work. This definition is similar to the description of work-life balance given by Kelliher, Richardson & Boiarintseva (2019) as the management of work and non- working time by an employee. The recurring theme in these and many other academic definitions of work-life balance is time-sharing techniques of an employee between work and life purposely to reduce conflict and enhance productivity.

Concept of Lecturers' Productivity

Productivity is a term that has multiple meanings and used differently in business, education, manufacturing, etc. The common element in all definitions of productivity relates to its mode of measuring input versus output. According to Sickles & Zelenyuk (2019), the notion of productivity imply the aggregate level of output per unit compared to the aggregate input per unit. A simplistic description of productivity refers to the relationship between the efficient use of input (or resources such as capital, labour, information, land, time and materials) and the output (end product, goods or services). Olaoye (cited in Babalola, Osuntade, Kio & Agbede 2019) asserted that productivity has two dimensions: namely total factor productivity and partial productivity. Total factor productivity or multi-factor productivity was developed by Solow and Swan in the 1950s and relates to the sum of all inputs (labour, capital and all other resources) not being in proportion to the output (Coomes et al., 2019). In other words, two set of lecturers in the same private university can have the same resources as inputs (time, technology, capital, materials, etc) and produce different outputs. On the other hand, partial productivity measures the output based on a single unit of input. This unit of input can be labour input, capital input or material input.

Given that the major characteristics of productivity deals with input and output, the conceptualization of lecturers' productivity is therefore defined within the framework of total factor productivity. In Nigeria, the measurement of productivity of lecturers is based on a number of factors that serve different purposes for private and public universities. For lecturers in public universities, their productivity is often measured in terms teaching/credit hours, number of students supervised and number of publications. For those in private universities, lecturers' productivity is measured based on the same teaching/credit hours, number of students supervised, number of publications and then, the pass rate of students. This accounts for differences in the number of graduate outputs in both private and public universities. For instance, the education statistics of the National University Commission (2017) shows that while Abia State University (a public university) graduated 3773 students with 15 students having first class, its counterpart Afe Babalola University, a private university in Ekiti State graduated 3533 with 218 students having first class. Thus, unlike lecturers in public universities in Nigeria, the pressure on lecturers in private universities is enormous as the management consider students' pass rate to be crucial to the survival of the university.

While scholars have examined work-life balance as a determinant of lecturers' productivity (Barooj & Gani, 2019; Cannizzo et al., 2019), there is dearth of scholarly works on the impact of global pandemic on the work-life balance of lecturers with implications on their productivity. This study therefore examines the impact of global pandemic (COVID-19) on the work-life balance and productivity of lecturers in private universities in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study made use of descriptive research design to investigate the extent to which COVID-19 affected the productivity of lecturers with reference to research and teaching output between March and October, 2020. The target population involves all academic staff in the 79 private universities in Nigeria. Purposive sampling of non-probability method was used to identify eight (8) private universities in Lagos State and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja to form the institutions used in the study. The criteria for selecting Lagos and Abuja is mainly due to the high number of COVID-19 confirmed cases in these geographical areas (Lago State = 20,884; Abuja = 5,993) October 27, 2020. While there are total of nine (9) accredited universities in these two states, only eight formed the sample as Eko University of Medical and Health Sciences Ijanikin, Lagos was not included in the study. The researcher relied on the statistics released by the National University Commission on academic staff strength in Nigeria (2018) to calculate the total number of participants in the study.

Table-1: Academic Staff Strength in Private Universities in Lagos and Abuja

Name of University	Male	Female	Total
African University of Science & Technology, Abuja	52	2	54
Augustine University, Lagos	32	11	43
Baze University, Abuja	162	64	226
Caleb University, Lagos	62	17	79
Nile University of Nigeria, Abuja	135	38	173
Pan-Atlantic University, Lagos	50	20	70
Veritas University Abuja	122	60	182
Anchor University Ayobo Lagos State	34	9	43
Total	649	221	870

Source: adapted from National Universities Commission (2017)

Taro Yamane formula n= N/(1+N (e)2) with 95% confidence level was used to calculate the number of participants needed to form the sample in the study. Where n=sample size, N=population size, e=the error of sampling.

n=870/(1+870(0.05)2)
n=870/(1+870(0.0025)
n=870/(1+2.175)
n=870/3.175
n=274

Thus, a total of 274 lecturers in private universities in Lagos and Abuja formed the sample for the study. Considering that the study was conducted during the global pandemic, snowball sampling technique was used to distribute the survey via Google Forms. The research instrument was validated using content validity. To measure the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of the items that gave a result of =.827 which indicates that the items are good and reliable. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression was used to analyse the data.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The Google Form returned a total of 220 responses (80 %) which is an acceptable response rate. In order to estimate the impact of COVID-19 on the work-life balance and productivity of lecturers, their responses were used to determine if it impacted on them negatively or positively.

Table-1: Descriptive Statistics

	Age	Gender	Married	Having Children
Valid	220	220	220	220
Mean	42.014	1.259	1.318	1.341
Median	41.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Mode	43.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Std. Deviation	8.443	0.439	0.467	0.475
Minimum	31.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Maximum	64.000	2.000	2.000	2.000

The average age in the sample is 43 years while the minimum is 31 years and the maximum, 64 years. The gender frequency indicates that 163 (74%) are male while 57 (26%) are female. The gender representation is a reflection of the distribution of gender of academic staff in the eight private universities used in this study. 150 (68%) are married while 70 (32%) are not married. On the other hand, 145 respondents (66%) have children while those without children are 75 (34%). The demographic analysis is useful in determining the excessive engagement of individual lecturer to work and family.

Table-2: Multivariate Regression Model showing that COVID-19 lockdown made lecturers in private universities to engage excessively in online classes and spent more time with homecare which negatively impacted on their work-life balance and productivity

	Work	Family
Enrolled Higher Degree	0.068	0.043
	(0.054)	(0.055)
Childcare (aged) 0-10 Years	0.054	0.175***
	(0.058)	(0.059)
Family Members (aged) ≥11	-0.048	-0.078*
	(0.041)	(0.042)
Teaching in Regular Classroom	0.285***	0.020
	(0.073)	(0.074)
Online Teaching from Home	0.181***	0.044
	(0.065)	(0.066)
Project Supervision at Workplace	-0.110*	0.112*
	(0.064)	(0.065)
Online Project Supervision	-0.092	0.103
	(0.072)	(0.073)
Constant	0.371*	-0.110
	(0.195)	(0.197)
Observations	220	220
R-squared	0.082	0.087

Note: Coefficient estimates are derived from ordinary least squares (OLS). Standard errors in parentheses. *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

In line one of the Table 2, it was observed that lecturers that are enrolled in higher degree (i.e Master's or PhD) reported excessive pressure on offering online classes and simultaneous meeting family commitments during the lockdown. In the second line, the workings show that lecturers with children who are less than 10 years find it difficult to combine child homeschooling with online class activities for their regular students. The imbalance between work and family consequently affected the productivity of lecturers as they reported low productivity in online class delivery when compared to teaching in regular classroom. Also, the regression analysis showed that the lecturers did more housework, spent more time with their children and spend less time supervising students' projects and conducting personal researches.

Based on the results, the government lockdown of states during COVID-19 actually increased the family commitment and childcare practices of lecturers. Simultaneously, it also made lecturers who are not familiar with online class delivery to adjust and comply with the directives given by their universities. Hence, it exerted immense pressure on the lecturers to teach students through online applications (i.e Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, etc) thereby increasing the workload even though the work hours significantly decreased. This is consistent with the findings of Alawamleh et al., (2020) which posit that lecturers are less productive in online classes as large number of students still prefer classroom classes over online classes. In other words, lecturers do not get the necessary motivation and feel isolation for not teaching their students one-by-one.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated the extent to which COVID-19 affected the work-life balance and productivity of lecturers in private universities in Nigeria. The literature shows that there is a growing interest among scholars to examine the far-reaching effects of the national emergencies on workforce productivity. Based on the empirical findings of the current study, lecturers in private universities could not effectively strike a balance between work and family during the global pandemic and therefore, were less productive especially in the areas of research and teaching. As the lockdown eases, it is recommended that university development of new work-life balance policies by the university management as well as retraining of lecturers in meeting up with the emerging needs of students and the university in a post COVID-19 world.

REFERENCES

- Adegboye, O. A., Adekunle, A. I., & Gayawan, E. (2020). Early Transmission Dynamics of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Nigeria. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17(9), 3054. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17093054
- Adeoye, I., Adanikin, A., & Adanikin, A. (2020). COVID-19 and E-Learning: Nigeria Tertiary Education System Experience. 5, 28–31.
- Alawamleh, M., Al-Twait, L. M., & Al-Saht, G. R. (2020). The effect of online learning on communication between instructors and students during Covid-19 pandemic. Asian Education and Development Studies, ahead-of-print (ahead-of-print). https://doi.org/10.1108/AEDS-06-2020-0131
- Babalola, D. A., Osuntade, B. O., Kio, J. O., & Agbede, C. O. (2019). Economic Burden of Malaria and Productivity of Farmers in Nigeria: Evidence from Ogun State. The Journal of Applied Sciences Research, 6(4), 1–13.
- Barooj., & Gani, A. (2019). Introspecting the discourse on quality of work life of university teachers. International Journal of Management Concepts and Philosophy, 12(2), 200–221. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJMCP.2019.099322
- BBC Pidgin. (2020). Nigerian private universities concerns as FG okay reopening of schools. BBC News Pidgin. https://www.bbc.com/pidgin/media-54024545
- Cannizzo, F., Mauri, C., & Osbaldiston, N. (2019). Moral barriers between work/life balance policy and practice in academia. Journal of Cultural Economy, 12(4), 251–264. https://doi.org/10.1080/17530350.2019.1605400
- Coomes, O. T., Barham, B. L., MacDonald, G. K., Ramankutty, N., & Chavas, J.-P. (2019). Leveraging total factor productivity growth for sustainable and resilient farming. Nature Sustainability, 2(1), 22–28. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-018-0200-3
- Kelliher, C., Richardson, J., & Boiarintseva, G. (2019). All of work? All of life? Reconceptualising work-life balance for the 21st century. Human Resource Management Journal, 29(2), 97–112. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12215
- Khaled, B. (2019). Impact of Work-Life Balance, Happiness at Work, on Employee Performance. International Business Research, 12(2).
- Messenger, J. C. (2019). Telework in the 21st Century: An Evolutionary Perspective. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- National Universities Commission. (2017). Nigerian University System Statistical Digest, 2017. National Universities Commission. https://nuc.edu.ng/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/REVISED-April-25-Statistical-Digest-min.pdf
- NCDC. (2020). COVID-19 Nigeria. https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng/
- Nishiura, H., Oshitani, H., Kobayashi, T., Saito, T., Sunagawa, T., Matsui, T., Wakita, T., Team, M. C.-19 R., & Suzuki, M. (2020). Closed environments facilitate secondary transmission of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). MedRxiv, 2020.02.28.20029272. https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.02.28.20029272
- Nwagbara, U. (2020). Exploring how institutions shape managerialist employment relations and work-life balance (WLB) challenges in Nigeria. Employee Relations: The International Journal, 42(6), 1401–1421. https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-07-2019-0269
- Ogunode, J, I, A., & A. E., L. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 on the Higher Institutions Development in Nigeria. Electronic Research Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 2(2).
- Raja, S., & Stein, S. L. (2014). Work–Life Balance: History, Costs, and Budgeting for Balance. Clinics in Colon and Rectal Surgery, 27(2), 71–74. https://doi.org/10.1055/s-0034-1376172
- Reuben, R. C., Danladi, M. M. A., Saleh, D. A., & Ejembi, P. E. (2020). Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices towards COVID-19: An Epidemiological Survey in North-Central Nigeria. Journal of Community Health. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10900-020-00881-1
- Sahu, P. (2020). Closure of Universities Due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Impact on Education and Mental Health of Students and Academic Staff. Cureus, 12(4). https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.7541
- Schoonenboom, J., & Johnson, R. B. (2017). How to Construct a Mixed Methods Research Design. KZfSS Kölner Zeitschrift Für Soziologie Und Sozialpsychologie, 69(2), 107–131. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11577-017-0454-1
- Sickles, R. C., & Zelenyuk, V. (2019). Measurement of Productivity and Efficiency. Cambridge University Press.
- Statista. (2020). Facts about COVID-19 for October, 2020. Statista. https://www.statista.com/page/covid-19-coronavirus
- Swarnalatha, D. C., & Rajalakshmi, S. (2017). A Hand Book on Work-Life Balance. Lulu Press, Inc.
- Toquero, C. M. (2020). Challenges and Opportunities for Higher Education amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Philippine Context. Pedagogical Research, 5(4). https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1263557
- Weber, M. J. (2020). A Global Perspective on Women in Leadership and Work-Family Integration: Breaking Balance. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.