WHY MANAGERS LOSE BALANCE; CAN TECHNOLOGY INFLUENCE BALANCE?

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Abstract - With the work environment becoming more complex and diverse, creative methods and approaches have emerged to deal with issues that were non-existent in the past. With the advancements of technology and multiple generations co-existing with different behavioral norms, a shift from traditional approach to Work–Life balance integration has become a big issue in HRM. Employees have been on the toes of the employers for justice and on the other hand employers have been keen to minimize the cost and effect of the same. Since work life balance pose a heavy cost to the organization in terms of time and cost. Even though the employment laws now permits family friendly programs, workplace implementation still remain a big challenge. Investing in what may work out well for the organization is also unavoidable. It is time for HRM to convince management to embrace work family programs to enable employees to attend to their family issues. As such, HRM has to provide developmental assistance to meet work development. This study is designed to explore how technology is shifting the relationship between work and life spheres and work outcome. Data were collected from 265 managers. The study demonstrated that advancements in technology will always affect how managers can manage both work and life domains. Findings from this study have significant implications for managers and the increasingly diverse workforce.

Keyword - Work life balance, information technology, firm performance.

I. INTRODUCTION

Changes in the demographic nature of workforce over the past few decades have increasingly challenged how work and life are managed and how such is being utilized by the five generations that co-exist in this environment. Employers have been keen to minimize the cost and effect of the same on their firm performance. On the other hand, employees have been on the toes of the employers to see if there could be justice done. However, the nature of the job itself has an impact on the ability of employees to integrate work and family (Thompson, & Prottas, 2006). Explicitly, the job of managers is very demanding and the possibility of balance work and family is uncertain. The reasons is that long hours and higher work demands of managers raise questions about how people within managerial position are able to balance work with other aspects of life (Fischlmayr & Kollinger, 2010). Second, work attitudes and values are changing with younger generations currently taking up managerial position, putting less importance on their career and more importance to achieving a balance between work life and home life (Sturges & Guest 2004). Successful managers in their jobs and careers usually spend majority of time and energy to work and little to family or leisure. Spending most time in office, travel frequently, attending to customers, and even taking full brief-cases home for the weekend. Even when managers are not working, work often occupies their minds. While managers sit at the family dinner table, their minds are miles away back in the office or the management meeting. When on vacation with families, they drag along an extra suitcase full of task and magazines on management. The issues of greatest worry to managers are if they could do a better job of balancing work and family to handle their personal lives—marriage, children, health, lifestyle, and values (Kofodimos, 1990). Even though managers may be troubled about the imbalance, they hardly change the way they allocate their time and energy. Reluctance to make this trade-offs is thought to reflect a lack of dedication (Kofodimos, 1990). As the work expands to dominate his/her time and energy, neglected family relationships deteriorate and become increasingly unsatisfying (Kofodimos, 1990).

Despite WLB issues have been widely examined lately, very little attention has been on role interference of technology interference and work-life balance among managers particularly male managers. Besides, studies dealing with this topic from a gender perspective seem to be almost non-existent. Even though Kossek and Lambert (2008) suggested that research should focus on these relationships in order to reconstruct the boundaries between the two. Past studies tend to be unidirectional and highlight the impact of family pressures on work, rather than to consider bidirectional influences (Shaffer, Harrison, & Joplin, 2001; Shortland & Cummins 2007). Haeger and Lingham (2013) revealed that rather than redrawing the boundaries between work and life, it is possible that clear boundary conditions have been subverted and that work and life demands and interactions have become fused through technological advancements. Additionally, researchers have offered mixed evidence of how balance between work and personal life may differ between females and males, and therefore suggested for more in-depth research (Mäkelä, Suutari, & Mayerhofer, 2011). As such, there is need for the search for an equilibrium state to a new paradigm with which people can manage with technology and the demands of work and life almost simultaneously. Due to the limited perspectives, this

paper aims to explore how technology can help to strengthen the work-life balance situation of male managers. The present study believes with the increasing technology, managers will increasingly surmount the challenges to balance competing demands of work and family lives (Thompson, & Prottas, 2006).

Next, before discussing possible technological advancement in such challenges and experiences, WLB are first discussed. Subsequently, the paper continues by presenting the methods and findings of this study, and ends with discussion and conclusions.

II. WORK LIFE BALANCE

Changes in the demographic nature of workforce over the past few decades have increasingly challenged employers, employees, and policy makers to develop strategies and tactics to balance competing demands of work and family lives (Thompson, & Prottas, 2006). Some researchers have propose taking advantage of creative approaches such as flex-time on the need to integrate work and life demand (Kossek, Barber, & Winters, 1999); others stressed on conflict and interference as underlying contributing factors (Guest, 2002); and some delve deeper into fundamental values and demographical operating norms from a generational perspective (Lockwood, 2003). A study by Ernst Kossek, and Ozeki, (1998) emphasized the possibilities for better integration of HR practices to work and family. It has been found that organizations that implement WLB achieve better market performance and sale growth (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Haar, Russo, Suñe & Ollier-Malaterre, 2014; Kim, 2014) better productivity and management practices (Bloom & Van Reenan, 2006), while those that fails to implement WLB experiences brain drain, loses skillful employees and greater loss of productivity (Dunne, 2007). Mäkelä et al., (2011) argued that a positive effect from the personal life to the work domain could be found when the positive mood generated by a relaxing weekend with friends carries over into the working week and manifests itself in more productive and pleasant contact with colleagues and business contacts, enhancing employee effectiveness. Kim (2014) also found that WLB has a significant positive effect on performance improvement. However, some researchers have argued that the effects may either be positive or negative in nature (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinleya, 2005). Konrad and Mangel (2000) found no relationship between work-life and productivity. Though perception may reflect objective situation, the actual support organizations may give to WLB varies from one context to the other. Hence, there is a need to further understand the impact of WLB particularly within the context of male managers. It is believed that this study would help to bridge this gap. In view of the above, this study hypothesized:

H1: there is a positive relationship between WLB and firm performance.

III. ADVANCEMENT IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Technological innovations, has resulted in significant shifts in working and living practices (Stawarz, Cox, Bird, & Benedyk, 2013). Permitting people to better combine work and non-work responsibilities however, technologies also have the potential to produce a more demanding workplace that threatens employees WLB (Stawarz, et al., 2013). Mobile devices like smartphones or laptops encourage working outside work hours and also upset employees' work-life balance if they receive calls outside their working hours. Technology encourages ‘working anywhere attitude, especially as the reported most common tasks do not require specialist software nor physical presence in an office (Stawarz, et al., 2013). According to Jarvis, and Pratt (2006), easy access to the Internet and work information, coupled with the portability of tablets, result to a blurring of the boundary between work and leisure time, causing work activities to extensity into non-work time and locations (Stawarz, et. al., 2013). Though, the level of exhaustion is particularly high in information technology (Hetland, Sandal, & Johnson, 2007). But increases productivity by allowing employees to work on simple tasks while away from the desk (Stawarz, et. al., 2013). While several articles have been published describing technology as office work tools, academic research is scarce (Stawarz, et al., 2013). As such, researchers have call for the need to seek and inquire into how Work–Life Fusion is work and life management with technology acting as the enhancement or catalyst (Haeger, & Lingham, 2014). Building on these considerations this study proposes that:

H2: Information technology is a potential moderator on the relationship between WLB and firm performance.

IV. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a quantitative research design based on structured questions with 265 managers. The sample was derived from a larger quantitative survey of business currently providing work family friendly program and partly using random sampling during January to March 2017. The respondents represented different industries. The validity as well as reliability of the study was guaranteed with a number of measures. The sample consists exclusively of male managers. Though female managers encounter comparable problems of balance similar to those of males, they face others that are quite different.

V. DATA COLLECTION AND THE SAMPLE

Because of the dynamic nature of Nigeria market, majority of the businesses are greatly affected by market pressures which forcefully cause many to fold up within a shorter time frame. This, make this study to sampled firms who have spent more than ten years in the industry. The respondents are senior manager in each of the firms examined. 320 questionnaires were randomly distributed to managers. Emails and telephone conversations was used to communicate the aim of the research to solicit for their support to participate in the survey. Subsequently, follow-up telephone calls were made to improve the response rate. This yielded a total of 265 responses.

VI. MEASUREMENT SCALES

This study classifies responses according to a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). To measure performance, managers were requested to respond to ten items adopted from de Waal (2010). Work life balance was measured by thirteen (13) items developed by Clark (2001). Technology was measured by five items adapted from the study by Quinn (1992).

VII. RESULTS

In order to confirm the model presented in this study, through testing of the hypothesis, a regression analysis results was presented at the significant level of $p< 0.05$. The analysis includes three steps. First, the independent variable of WLB was entered into the regression to examine the direct effects on firm performance. Second the moderator variable (information technology) was entered. Fourth, the interaction term of moderator was entered as a block. However, the prediction that WLB has positive influence on performance was not supported (ß = 0.028, P<0.217) (see Table 1).To achieve the second research objective, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to test the effect of information technology on WLB and performance. For the hierarchical regression model with WLB as the dependent variable, the interaction with information technology is statistically significant in the predicted direction. Step 3 in Table 11 showed that the incremental F-statistic for the interacting items is significant. This result provides evidence that information technology moderates the influence of WLB on firm performance: Tables I and 11 shows the results of the hypothesis testing.

Variables	Standard error	Beta (ß)	Sig
WLB	.316	0.028	0.217
R^2			38.7%
Sig. F change			0.000^{***}

Table 4.1: Regression Analysis
***P<0.10, **<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant**

Variables in the Model	Model 1 Independent variable	Model 2 Moderating variable	Model 3 Interaction variable
WLB	0.217^{NS}	0.096	0.043^{**}
F change	18.293	4.107	7.032
Sig. F change	0.003	0.014	0.003
R^2	0.316	0.328	0.363
Adjusted R^2	0.305	0.315	0.339
R^2 change	0.017	0.016	0.034

Hierarchical Regression Result
*P<0.10, **<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant

DISCUSSION

This study examined the relationship between work life balance (WLB) and firm performance. Surprisingly, the result did not support that WLB has direct positive influence on performance. This discrepancy causes uncertainty in the implementation of WLB in many organizations. Making some firms perceive it as enriching while others view the practice as a hindrance. This result provides a better insight that implementation of work life balance is subject to the nature of job, size and the age of the firm. Although, the result clearly do not support WLB and managers performance and somewhat inconsistent with past literature, however, it is an important finding particularly in workplace settings where in most cases, managers' sacrifices their personal gains for their organizational goals in order to encourage the growth of the firm. In such situation, managers will perceive WLB as a hindrance. There are several plausible and important explanations for the result of the present study. First, WLB depends on the situation and the environment. Implementing WLB may have unfavorable effect on the managers because of the undue advantage some individuals may take over the program which may be harmful to the successful achievement of the firm's goals. Apart from the above, the current economy in most

countries is worrisome and this has led to firms cost cutting and budgetary constraints. For instance, BERR (2008) and BIS (2010) estimated the costs per flexible work hour to be £88 and £62 respectively. This may impede firm's implementation of WLB because implementing WLB will caused firms to increase labour and cost. This may further put firms in poor financial situation, because of increasing cost. Furthermore, Over 90% of managers work longer hours than required. Managers at their early stage usually justify their extra-hard work to convince the employers to believe on them. At the same time convincing their family that it is a temporary condition that will help them to advance to a secure position where they can relax a bit. However, the pressures continue with long, repeated relocation and everyday travel are treated as proof of commitment and loyalty all through the manager's career. Managers should be aware that office romances can result when the workplace becomes the primary source of personal relationships as such, the need to balance work is important. Imbalance may reach maximum level before managers acknowledge that it has developed. The market competition also challenges managers' thinking, style and causing pressures for them. This pressure will further worsen if managers implement flexible work hour. As such, reduced hours are not considered to be an option in any senior management position.

The study also finds that the use of WLB will result to better performance if firms combine information technology (IT). The results show that advancement in IT safeguard the impact of work–life balance and firm performance. IT empowers managers to develop new skills to view challenges as opportunity. Thus, firms that combine IT and WLB will significantly enhance performance. This suggests that IT is essential to realize full potentials of WLB. Productivity improvement will be higher if firms take advantage of IT to implement WLB. Lack of attention to IT can weaken WLB implementation. Similarly, advancement in IT removed the boundaries previously limiting organizations from implementing WLB, because through IT manager can arrange virtual meetings via video conferencing with the employees without physical present in the workplace. This study contributed to body of knowledge by presenting the dynamics of the bi-directional interplay between technology and work family balance. The uniqueness of this finding is that new human resource practices are associated with improved performance only when the practices are implemented as a bundle and not separately. Hence, firms that successfully adopt WLB and IT as cluster of mutually reinforcing organizational practices will achieve better performance. This study believes this is the first of its kind to specifically examine the effect of information technology on WLB and firm performance. The results suggest that firms need to make greater investment in IT to remain competitive in the current changing market environment, because investment in IT will further help to improve manager's work and family balance.

CONCLUSION

Several gaps existed in the literature on WLB. Prior studies on WLB did not address role interference of technology interference and work-life balance issues among managers particularly male managers. Besides, studies dealing with this topic from a gender perspective seem to be almost non-existent. The present study has helped to address these issues. The results of the study lead to several conclusions. That WLB has no direct influence on performance. Secondly, the study found that information technology influence WLB and performance achievement. While previous researches have pointed to the direct effects, the present study provides insight into technology as a moderator of WLB and performance. Therefore, this study is unique such that it has help to fill the gaps that existed in WLB literature. However, the study is not without limitation, the analyses were conducted on cross-sectional data. As such, no conclusions on the direction of causality can be drawn. Future study can bring a better understanding of causality between WLB, technology and performance by using longitudinal data. Another limitation comprises the generalizability of the findings to companies outside of Nigeria and in different industries. Though the nature of the issue under examination suggests that the idea of advancement in information technology influencing the relationship between WLB and performance should hold across settings, future study should look into the interrelationships with additional samples and in other context.

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