THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE HRM DEPARTMENT IN ENHANCING WORK-LIFE BALANCE: A CASE STUDY OF OANDO PLC (NIGERIA)

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Abstract

Work-life balance (WLB) is a crucial area of HRM (Human Resource Management), which has become a top priority for employees globally. Hence, this research intends to evaluate the HRM department's role in enhancing WLB while considering Oando as the case study and providing recommendations that could help the company and its workers improve WLB, leading to job satisfaction. The sample was randomly selected 50 employees representing the human resource sector of the Oando PLC. The data was collected using self-administered questionnaires. Various strategies were put in place in data collection to ensure that information collected was accurate. The results revealed that most employees seem not to be satisfied with their job; thus, they cannot have a sufficient work-life balance. The majority of the employees are on high demand tasks and need to be finished with stringent deadlines. Furthermore, when these employees finish one such assignment, they must immediately move to a similarly challenging task. They are tremendously stressed in such a work atmosphere, and as a result, workers' efficiency and effectiveness drop-down at work and have a low work-life balance.
Keywords: Work-life balance; Human Resource Management; Oando PLC; Employees

INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, organizations are increasingly becoming aware of the significance of enhancing a healthy WLB for employees since it has been indicated to improve employees' job satisfaction (Shantha, 2019). For the past several years, a lot has changed between employees' work life and personal life. There have been improvements in the time employees work, their flexibility of working, companies paying for employees' training and vacation to encourage work-life balance, and other changes. However, this is the case; we are not yet there because some organizations, individuals, and countries are not yet aware of the importance of WLB. In the past, people used to work for long hours as they believed that the sole purpose of a human being is working, but this is changing with time. Due to the technological changes and cultural changes, the perspective of WLB will have significantly changed in the future.

An equal balance is not the definition of work-life. It is unrealistic to try to schedule an equal number of hours that one should spend on a specific task or personal activities. The description of WLB is the balance required by an employee between the time allocated for work and other elements of life. This means that WLB is about looking for the right balance between an individual's life and their work life. Most organizations that do no balance between work and life often deal with burnout and stress issues (Shantha, 2019). An overworked employee has a high chance of suffering health issues; an overworked employee is more likely to suffer health problems, less friendly, less efficient, might find it challenging to work with them. Most of the time, they are either sick or absent. A good WLB enables employees to have more control over their working life, which results in increased productivity.

Consequently, it is the Human Resource's responsibility to ensure that workers are both satisfied and healthy at work. This can only happen by standing in the gap for workers and putting managerial and organizational policies and expectations to ensure that employees are adequately treated (Azeem and Akhtar, 2014). The following are the additional role that human resource plays to enhance work-life balance. One of these roles is coming up with a flexi-time policy. Flexi-time will enable Oando PLC to reschedule employees' working time by allowing them to select the time they are more conversant with the organization's specific guidelines. The policy has been proven to work for full-time employees effectively. It can also work at Oando since employees will be allowed to attend non-work demands without necessarily thanking time off their work. Employees who work in an understanding environment or workplace are more likely to be loyal to that particular company (Azeem and Akhtar, 2014).

The second role human resource plays in enhancing work-life balance is organizing seminars and training on work-life balance. Human resources must organize training and workshops on training to engage workers and better understand the usefulness of WLB to both

the workers and the company (Shantha, 2019). The other role is enforcing digital downtime. Therefore, Oando should ensure that they are aware of the importance of implementing digital downtime. Hence, the organization should schedule a time for tapping out the technology into their schedules to give their minds enough time to rest. Suppose employees are continuously working without going for break, lunch, sending and responding to emails using their devices at night, and responding to queries and requests during their holidays. The HR needs to intervene and develop solutions to assist the employees in taking some much-required digital downtime. One way of achieving this is by encouraging employees to take a walk at lunchtime, taking digital breaks during the day; this helps add technology-free periods in their working days.

It is also the HR's role to encourage employees to go on vacation, especially for small companies and growing startups. They frequently experience the most pressure working day to day without regarding self-rejuvenation and personal time. HR must ensure that employees take a vacation for their benefits. Apart from holidays benefiting employees, the organizations also benefit since they feel relaxed and ready to continue working; thus, their productivity is enhanced. Therefore, a good WLB in Oando will improve employees' health, increase their productivity, lead to job satisfaction, reduce employee turnover, and increases staff loyalty. When the employees' productivity is increased, it will result in growth in the organization's productivity.

Background Information

Oando PLC is an international energy company based in Nigeria founded in 1956 by Adewale Tinubu. Its headquarters are in Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria (Oando, 2020). Oando agreed with the Vitol Group in July 2016. The two came into agreement to form OVH. It is among the leading energy providers in Africa with a vast heritage. The company has TRIPP shared value (Oando, 2020).

Research Question

What role does the HR department play in enhancing work-life balance in a case study of Oando?

Objectives

- To determine the factors that affect an employee's work-life balance.
- To evaluate the role played by the HRM team towards enhancing work-life balance in Oando PLC.

- To determine the link between job satisfaction (JS) and WLB.
- To assess the importance of work-life balance to Oando's employees.

Scope of the Study

Work-life balance is crucial to both the organization and employees as it benefits the two. Several advantages come with adopting work-life balances, such as job satisfaction, increased employee productivity, employee loyalty, and improved organizational performance. This study assesses the HRM team's role in Oando towards enhancing work-life balance. The study also assesses the effectiveness of the strategies implemented to develop various enhancements to ensure that the HRM department's system at Oando PLC leads to employees' WLB.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical framework

A company can't create a perfect team of experts without a good HRM team. An HRM team's main activities in an organization include recruit and training employees, workplace communication, performance appraisals, workplace safety, and motivating employees (Ashfag, Mahmood, and Ahmad, 2013). The HR team's work ensures that employees balance their work life and their family life. One of the crucial theories to this study is the work-life enrichment theory, which can be defined as the extent to which an employee's experience in one role enhances the quality of life in the other part. Therefore, if an employee has a good day at work, this will lead to improvements in their family life, and vice versa is also the case. Therefore, balancing work life and family life will lead to both job satisfaction and family satisfaction. Unlike in the past days where employees were advised to live their problems at home, today the HRM team wants to know employees' personal lives since it can affect an employees' work-life and productivity at work (Fatima & Sahibzada, 2012). Many successful companies and people want to work for them because they care about their workers' well-being.

The other theory is the work-family conflict theory. This occurs when a person experiences incompatible demands between family and work roles, leading to difficult participation in both parts. In most cases, the work-family conflict is caused by work-life, where an individual overwork in their job places to the point of failing to balance between the two roles. In the past studies, the work-family conflict has negatively influenced a person's quality of family life and quality of work-life, positively associated with life satisfaction (Shantha, 2019). Therefore, any individual or organization needs to understand the implications related to the work-life conflict. In particular cases, the work-family war has been linked to job stress,

occupational burnout, job performance, organizational commitment, and decreased health (Higgins, Duxbury, and Irving, 1992).
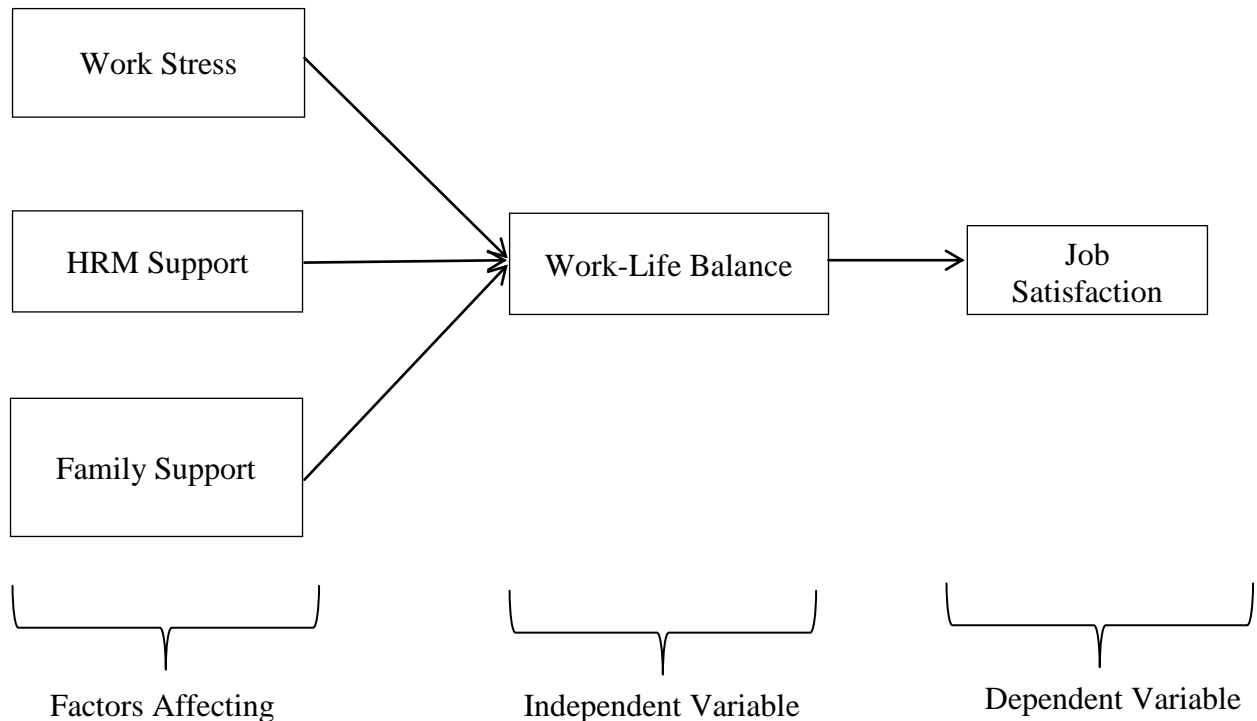
Conceptual framework

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODS

The study

The study used descriptive research design.

Target Population

The study targets human resource employees at Oando and the human resource department to evaluate the role the department and the employees play towards enhancing work-life balance. Oando has approximately 300 hundred employees. The sample size of this study was 50 participants who were randomly selected from the HRM department.

Data Collection

The study used face-to-face interviews and questionnaires to conduct the study and relevant information needed to inform the research. Secondary data was also used, including current

and previous employees' data, employees' evaluation forms from the HRM department of the Oando PLC. Questionnaires included 15 open-ended questions and 15 closed-ended questions that were linked to the topic of discussion. The number of participants was evenly distributed with 25 males and 25 females, and out of this number, 3 participants were employees living with a disability. Other things considered were age, experience, education level, job satisfaction, and work-life. The closed-ended questions included 5 scales (Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree).

Structural questionnaires comprised both open-ended questions and closed-ended questions, and they were used to determine the HR department's roles in enhancing work-life balance at Oando PLC. The questionnaire had four sections where. Section A had 5 questions that were used to collect Oando's employees' demographic data, such as education, gender, age, and other factors. Section B had 10 questions that were used to further gather data upon factors affecting work-life balance. Section C had 10 questions that collected data related to work-life balance. Section D consisted of 5 questions, and it enabled the researcher to collect data relating work-life balance to employees' job satisfaction. The questionnaire was distributed among 30 employees, selecting from the total 300, they were given 7 days to fill and submit the questionnaire. None of 50 questionnaires were disqualified, for all 50 were used in the research. A researcher had to spend a one-week time duration to collect all questionnaires back for analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis survey was analyzed and information was collected using descriptive statistics and frequency distribution methods.

RESULTS

Usual Hours of Work

When the employees were asked their regular working hours, the researcher came up with the following results.

Table 1. Usual Hours of Work

Usual Hours of Work per Week	Percentage
Less than 10 hours	1%
11 to 15 hours	1%
16 to 20 hours	6%
21 to 25 hours	5%
26 to 30 hours	9%

31 to 35 hours	7%	Table 1…
36 to 40 hours	36%	
41 to 45 hours	16%	
46 to 50 hours	8%	
51 to 55 hours	3%	
56 to 60 hours	3%	
More than 60 hours	2%	

The above table indicates that most employees at Oando work between 36 to 40 hours per week, represented by 36%. The employees who worked less than 10 hours a week were only represented by 1%, while those who worked between 11 to 15 hours were also represented by 1%. Employees who worked 16 to 20 hours were 6%, 21 to 25 were 5%, 26 to 30 were 9%, 31 to 35 were 7%, 36 to 40 were 36%, 41 to 45 were 16%, 46 to 50 were 8%, 51 to 55 were 3%, 56 to 60 were 3%, and those who worked more than 60 hours per week were 2%.

Employees working time

The following results indicate the result obtained after the researcher evaluated the number of hours employees work overtime, including paid and unpaid overtime.

Table 2. Paid overtime

Number of hours Work per Week	Percentage
Less than 1 hours	5%
1 to 2 hours	27%
3 to 5 hours	24%
6 to 9 hours	15%
10 to 14 hours	17%
15 or more hours	8%
Do not know	5%

5% of the participants indicated that they were paid to work overtime for less than one hour. 27% of the participants stated that they were paid to work overtime for 1 to 2 hours. 24% of the participants indicated that they were paid to work overtime for 3 to 5 hours. The employees paid to work overtime for 6 to 9 hours were 15%, while 17% worked between 10 to 14 hours. 8% of the participants were paid to work overtime, and they worked for 15 hours or more. 5% of the participants indicated that they did not know whether they were paid to work overtime.

Unpaid Overtime

The following results indicate the result obtained after the researcher evaluated the number of hours into the unpaid overtime.

Table 3. Unpaid Overtime

Number of hours Work per Week	Percentage
Less than 1 hours	3%
1 to 2 hours	28%
3 to 5 hours	28%
6 to 9 hours	12%
10 to 14 hours	14%
15 or more hours	13%
Do not know	3%

3% of the participants indicated that they were not paid to work overtime for less than one hour. 28% stated that they were not paid to work overtime for 1 to 2 hours. 28% of the participants indicated that they were not paid to work overtime for 3 to 5 hours. The participants who were not paid to work overtime for 6 to 9 hours were 12%, while 14% worked between 10 and 14 hours. 13% of the participants were not paid to work overtime, and they worked for 15 hours or more. 3% of the participants indicated that they did not know whether they were paid to work overtime.

Awareness of work-life balance policies

The participants were asked to indicate whether they were aware of the organization's work-life balance policies. The following are the results obtained.

Table 4. Awareness of work-life balance policies

5 Point of Scale	Percentage
Strongly Aware	12%
Aware	22%
Neutral	15%
Not Aware	36%
Strongly Not Aware	15%

12% of the participants indicated that they were strongly aware of the company's work-life balance policies, 22% of the participants stated that they were aware of the company's WLB policies, 15% of the employees were neutral. 36% of the participants indicated that they were not aware of the company's WLB policies, and 15% of the participants stated that they were strongly not aware of the company's WLB policies

Take-up of flexible working arrangements

The employees were asked to indicate whether they have ever worked in any of the following ways over the past year and with their current employer. The following are the results obtained.

Table 5. Take-up of flexible working arrangements

Different working ways	Percentage
Work flexitime	57%
Work from home regularly	52%
Work only during school term-time	43%
Work a compressed working week	35%
Work annualized hour	30%
Work part-time	27%
Work reduced hours for a limited period	19%
Job-share	14%

The results indicate that flexitime was the most frequent working arrangement. The majority of the participants stated that they had worked over the past year and with their current employer. Since in the current organization, 57 percent of the employees had worked in this way. The second preferred way was working from home, which had over half of the participants. This was the most preferred option considering that most of the companies have been affected by the current pandemic; therefore, working from home is safer than going to the job places. The other reason why this way was preferred is that the working practice is a lifestyle way that could not affect their income considering that they do not spend bus fare going to their job places and going back to their homes. Another benefit of this strategy is that the employees are given the freedom to choose their working hours. 43% of the participants indicated that they worked on term-time; 35% stated that they had worked in a compressed working week. 30% of the participants indicated that they had worked in annualized hours, 27% of the employees stated that they had worked overtime, 19% of employees worked for reduced hours for a limited period, and 14% indicated they had worked under the job-share strategy

The reason why various participants chose to work the way they do

Table 6. The reason why various participants chose to work the way they do

Reason	Percentage
Work-life becomes more comfortable, and it is more efficient	20%
Childcare	15%
Job Demands	14%
That is the nature of my work	12%
Have more free time	9%
Demands of employer	6%
To spend more time with my family	5%
Other caring requirements of friends, relatives, or neighbors	5%

Health issues	3%	Table 6...
To fit with travel arrangements	2%	
The cost of paying for childcare	1%	
Other	15%	
Do not know	3%	

Demand for flexible working arrangements

Table 7. Need for flexible working arrangements

Reason	Percentage
Work flexitime	50%
Work reduced hours for a limited period	35%
Work a compressed working week	31%
Work only during school term-time	28%
Work from home regularly	26%
Work annualized hours	6%
Work part-time	21%
Job-share	18%

DISCUSSIONS

Work-Life Balance & Job Satisfaction

The company should have a work arrangement that helps workers have flexible timing and balance between their work life and the time they spend with their families. The more flexible employees are more satisfied ad they report high JS (Gayathiri & Ramakarishnan, 2013). Likewise, (Guest 2002) found that WLB practices employees satisfied and effectively hand both their work and family life. Employers should provide their employees with service that influences them to have moments with their loved ones. When an employee has adequate WLB arrangements, their productivity increases, and its profit and productivity also increase.

Relationship between Work Stress & Work-Life Balance

The study shows that there are positive relationships found on work-life balance by work stress. The study conducted by (Nadeem & Abbas, 2009) found a negative relationship between JS and stress. An increase in pressure results in a decrease in employee JS. The results contradict the previous research. However, a study conducted by (Nadeem & Abbas, 2009) supported the research finding. They found a positive relationship between working hours and JS (Working hours is one predictor for WS in the research). As a whole, we can conclude that up to some extent, work stress is necessary to increase Oando Company employees' job satisfaction.

Relationship between HRM Support & WLB

The result indicates a positive relationship between Management Support and Work-Life Balance, as the hypothesis predicted a positive relationship between management support and work-life balance. Therefore, the null hypothesis for Management support and WLB is rejected. Similar results are found by previous research conducted by (Parvin 2011). They concluded in their study that there is a positive relationship between WLB & MS. Similarly, (Varatharaj & Vasantha 2012) research identified that MS is critical to the WLB initiative. This type of encouragement can be strengthened to provide timely and constructive feedback on employee performance.

Relationship between Family Support & Work-Life Balance

According to the study, there is a positive relationship between Family Support and WLB. This result is consistent with other studies and supported (Azeem & Akhtar W, 2014). They found that family members' support plays a crucial towards balancing work and personal life. Family member support is a leading judge of WLB.

Findings from unstructured interviews

Unstructured, informal interviews were carried out by the researcher with the prior approval from the Group Human Resources Manager of the Oando Company to get a proper insight into employee perception of the company's current WLB system and Job Satisfaction level. The interview was carried out with randomly selected ten staff members. After having interviews with them, their point of view, the writer has to mention the following conclusions:

The company's reward system is not clearly defined and has a complicated reward process, and most of the employees do not have a better understanding of the current reward system. The management of the Oando Company has not identified the importance of having a reward system. A sound reward system inclusive of extrinsic, intrinsic rewards outcome effect to the employee performance. The top management of Oando not recognizing employees as an asset. They are following a give and takell policy concerning the rewards, not giving recognition to the employees. Basic salary and salary increments are not competitive levels compare to other companies' pay levels. Therefore, employees are not happy, and management is not paying attention to give competitive-based pay. The salary increments do not depend on individual performance-based, and every employee is given a flat salary increment. The annual bonus scheme also does not consider employees' performance, and employees are not happy about the yearly bonus they currently receive. The individual performance level is not

communicating to employees. Therefore, employees do not identify their strengths and weaknesses. Training and Development programs are not conducting for employees, and the company pays less attention to employee entertainment. Employees are not happy about the current, entertaining programs. Lack of supervision is highlighted in the company, increases error rate, absenteeism, and punctuality. There is no teamwork feeling among the employee, and they do not have a positive sense about the company. Also, from their point of view, they are not treating fairly. Employees are not happy with the administrative legislations of the company as they are very strict. There is a lack of relationship between management and employees.

CONCLUSION

Work Life Balance (WLB) has become one of the most crucial policies that companies have been applying to balance their work-life and personal and families' lives. This has resulted in rapid changes in organizations and life, such as a rapid increase in work and personal responsibilities, and Oando has not been an exception. Although Oando has implemented various strategies to ensure employees' work-life balance, a lot needs to be done to ensure an appropriate balance between the two. In the past, there was a misperception that work was the only thing that can help both the company and the employees rise. But this is changing as employees and organizations become aware of the importance of WLB. The HRM team is responsible for setting good examples of WLB and how it is expected for its employees.

One of the recommendations is that Oando PLC can conduct seminars on WLB to understand its importance and come up with ways of obtaining it. The seminars will teach employees to manage their workload better, do away with unproductive work habits, negotiate more flexible working conditions, and get sufficient exercises. The other recommendation is that the company should encourage the use of vacation and sick leave time. Through the procedure the employees take time-off when it is necessary and this is beneficial to both the organization and the employees. The last recommendation is that the company need to enhance its WLB policies in employees' handbooks and orientations. This will help employees achieve WLB and give them the feeling that it is important to take some time off from their work. The company also encourages their employees to further studies by providing the involved employees with an enabling work schedule. With this there is mutually benefit to both the company and the employee since the acquired skills are applied in the same company hence enhancing the company performance.

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