



A qualitative study of work-life balance as an industrial strategy to satisfy employees in Abidjan, ivory coast

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Abstract

Research indicates that in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, work-life balance has an Immediate influence on retention of workers and contentment. As a result, a lot of businesses are developing plans and starting projects to hold onto people. The knowledge of how staff perceive planned initiatives of the organization centered on work-life balance that foster worker fulfillment, nevertheless is lacking in practice. In order to gain a competitive edge and promote retention, this qualitative investigation looked at employees' perceptions on key company work-life balance efforts. The study's central research issue was how workers felt about the planned work-life balance initiatives implemented by their companies. Eight respondents from four distinct companies in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, who were acquainted with planned enterprise work-life balance initiatives that affected their company's edge in the marketplace, provided data for the study through semistructured interviews. Thematic qualitative analysis was employed for the study of the data. The qualitative data analysis revealed two themes: (a) encouraging a work-life balance and (b) work-life balance problems. Management may benefit from the investigation's outcomes by better understanding how workers perceive these planned efforts, which could promote employee fulfillment by means of more job improvement, better work-life balance for workers, and greater hiring and retaining percentages.

Keywords: Work-life balance, industries, Abidjan

Introduction

Work-life equilibrium as a business plan is the focus of the present investigation. In order to gain a competitive edge, this study focuses on how workers perceive planned initiatives from the company that promote balance between work and life in a constantly evolving environment. The capacity to use technological devices to work from everywhere at any given moment is known as a "always-on" lifestyle. McCollum and the "new nowhere land" of the always-on lifestyle was the subject of Kinman's (2017) investigation. The use of technology for communication and information has a crucial role in enhancing adaptability and potentially resulting in medical issues for specialists in the workforce. The work-life balance could be improved, balance by being more adaptable. On the other hand, continuous connectivity and remote work compromise the wellbeing of workers (Büchler *et al.*, 2020)^[7].

In addition to identifying what staff members think helps and what doesn't, this research investigation looks at how planned efforts to promote work-life harmony benefit personnel and how they could strengthen the competitive advantage of an organization. Workers are uncommon, precious, and non-replaceable commodities (Barney *et al.*, 2021)^[4, 5]. According to Davies *et al.* (2019)^[10], firms that want to establish or preserve an edge over their rivals should invest in their workforce. In order to improve a company's competitive edge, this study examines the business techniques employed to foster an improved work-life balance for employees.

For their companies, individuals constitute a vital competitiveness strength. As a result of their implicit expertise and ability set, workers are essential assets to the company (Barney *et al.*, 2021)^[4, 5]. By contributing quality to the company and offering a unique edge over rivals,

personnel can become an immediate driver of advantage over rivals (Davis, 2017)^[11]. Personnel are also important assets because they provide ongoing management through their comprehension of the business, the good, the way of life, and clients (Davies *et al.*, 2019)^[10]. According to Anggiani and Anita's research from 2021^[3], employees' persistent edge in competition was impacted by their innovation. According to Yu and Yang (2022)^[23], having inventive and creative staff members is essential to boosting a business's competitive edge.

Balance between work and personal lives and physical fitness have been viewed differently by workers as well as businesses because of the COVID-19 outbreak (Park *et al.*, 2021)^[18]. The pandemic has altered what happens by driving people to work remotely and developing new technologies, but there is a wealth of published literature and research that addresses the problem of balancing work and private life and how to obtain an edge over competitors. This means that placing this endeavor within the current body of research requires a study of other attempts to solve the issue. The academic research on the balance between work and life looked into how community is affected by the always-on lifestyle, how remote work changes the standard of life, as well as how the pandemic has altered workplace culture and the nature of work in the coming years. The impact of technology in daily life was examined in McDowall and Kinman's (2017)^[15] research of the "new nowhere land" and always-on lifestyle. While modern technology improves flexibility, it also poses a risk to working individuals' healthcare. Stankevičienė *et al.* (2021)^[21] looked into how harmony between personal and professional lives affected workplace ethos. The impact of diverse jobs and personal obligations and finances on the balance between harmony between personal and

professional lives and employment persistence of working moms was investigated by Fan and Potočnik (2021)^[12]. Büchler *et al.*'s (2020)^[7] study, which was grounded in boundary theory, contributed to the corpus of understanding by investigating the effects of constant connectedness in working environments through mobile employment devices and concentrating on the circumstances under which and for whom this could have been related to employee wellness. Park *et al.* (2021)^[18] examined how the pandemic affected distant work practices, how it affected workers' psychological health, and how staffing issues contributed to the shift for the better. Stankevičienė *et al.* (2021)^[21] looked into how work-life balance affected workplace style. Balance between job and life and conflicts between work and family life were simple to quantify and research before technology provided constant connectedness since there were specific boundaries and limits between the spheres. Büchler *et al.* (2020)^[7] talked about how continual connectedness and a mindset of perpetual presence for work can worsen people's health. Functioning anywhere all the time will eventually replace the freedom to work from wherever at any given moment (Von Bergen & Bressler, 2019)^[22].

Statement of The Problem

By keeping and gratifying workers, industrial policies can improve job and personal life balance and support the preservation of the company's competitive edge. A planned concentration on personnel enhances the company's competitiveness, as demonstrated by Castro- González and Pérez's (2021)^[9] study on spirituality in the workplace, a project balancing both professional and private life that examined staff happiness, efficacy, and dedication. The stated importance of balance between professional and private life and administrators' responses to demands for a balance between professional and private life, however, are at odds, which has a detrimental effect on staff recruitment. The commercial sectors in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, are unsure about implementing work-life rules in their businesses, and there is uncertainty about the concept's application. In order to raise awareness and provide light on the concept's paradigm in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, the researchers thus made the decision to conduct an investigation along these lines.

Aim of the Study

The purpose of this research is to comprehend how workers in Abidjanian industries perceive the strategic measures their company is implementing to enhance balance between work and personal life.

Research Question

This study was guided by the research question: How do workers perceive the strategic efforts implemented by their companies to enhance balance between work and personal life and foster their happiness at work?

Methodology and Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design and methodology. When an investigator tries to comprehend an issue from an individual's perspective, they use a qualitative methodology to investigate and evaluate a phenomena or case (Hammarberg *et al.*, 2016)^[14]. It is suitable to use a technique for qualitative study when examining the viewpoints and views of respondents. When an investigator

tries to comprehend something from an individual's point of view, they use a qualitative methodology to investigate and evaluate a phenomena or case (Hammarberg *et al.*, 2016)^[14]. In order to characterize and explain observable events, Merriam and Tisdell's (2016)^[16] qualitative research relies on what individuals have experienced.

Participants

The venture's sample group consisted of workers from any of the four industrial organizations. Personnel with over three years of job experience who have participated in significant organizational efforts centered on maintaining a balance between work and life were the target audience. Ensuring high-quality research outcomes requires recruiting volunteers who possess relevant experience related to the research topic. Consequently, in order to exclude people at random and to gather useful data, investigators need deliberately choose individuals (Campbell *et al.*, 2020)^[8]. The investigators employed purposeful sampling. The investigators are in charge of choosing the subjects, according to Moser and Korstjens (2018)^[17]. To make sure those taking part have deep understanding of and previous involvement with the subject matter, purposeful sampling is the best option. The method of purposeful sampling was used in this study's recruitment of volunteers who were knowledgeable about enterprise planning balance between work and personal lives in order to guarantee a thorough comprehension of the scenarios examined. The methods employed for this investigation are described in the section that follows. Eight individuals were chosen for the study from four different Abidjan industries.

Data Collection Instruments

Investigators utilize semi-structured interviews to allow the interviewee to tell a story on a certain topic and to allow the conversation to flow freely (Hanson *et al.*, 2017). The investigators used similar semi-structured questions on every single person during the google meet video conferencing platform interviews in order to promote discussion and gather insight. The investigators purposefully prepared and had conversations with the respondents about the investigation in order to foster communication and relationships with the participants in order to get valuable information that would assist them improve the study's trustworthiness.

Data Collection and Procedure

Initially, a comprehensive strategy and guide to interviews were created by the investigators and performed. Following a review of the interview questions by four professionals in the field, the investigators performed two simulated interviews with candidates who satisfied the selection requirements. Using Google Meet platform, the investigators performed semistructured interviews with each individual. According to Archibald *et al.* (2019)^[2], this technology enables easy use, communication with attendees that are spread out geographically, and meet recording. Furthermore, Google Meet's security features enable the encryption and safe preservation of sensitive and private data gathered during interviews (Archibald *et al.*, 2019)^[2]. Respondents were informed that they were free to leave the study at any moment. Every interviewee agreed to have their audio recorded by having access to Google Meet. At the scheduled time, individuals were asked to allocate 45

minutes for their conversations, which lasted between 25 to 30 minutes. Although responders were assigned identification codes ranging from R1 to R8, their full names and other personally identifiable information were not linked to their records. Research and evaluations contained no names or other personally identifiable information. Throughout the process of identifying the sample, gathering and analyzing data, and storing data after the compilation process, individuals maintained their anonymity.

Data Analysis

In this study, the thematic analysis method was applied. Data analysis is an essential element in the research methodology. Data collection was the starting point for data analysis, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016) [16]. To organize and put forth data such that it can be interpreted and verified, investigators use data analysis (Mattimoe *et al.*, 2021).

Findings

The information gathered from the participant interviews is presented in the section that follows, arranged according to these themes: a) encouraging an equilibrium between work and personal life and (b) addressing issues related to work-life balance,

1. Encouraging an Equilibrium Between Work and Personal Life.

The first theme of the analysis was how companies encourage or neglect to encourage balance between work and life. According to Fazal *et al.* (2022) [13], companies that make sustainable use of their workforce can foster innovation, ingenuity, and employee well-being in addition to raising productivity levels.

Several of these traits are reflected in the interviews conducted for this study. All eight panelists emphasized how crucial it is for their company to support work-life balance. R2, R4, R5, R7, and R8 discussed the ways in which their companies support a harmonious union of both professional and personal lives.

R1, R3, and R6, on the other hand, clarified that the companies they represent do not.

R2. emphasized how crucial it is for the leader to provide an example of good behavior.

"It is undoubtedly one of the top goals in the company that I lead, therefore I have set expectations and communicated this vision to my team. I also regularly make sure that everyone gets home on time, occasionally even early. However, the entity in charge of me might not share my priorities".

R3 said

"Working from my residence and having freedom is great because I can complete tasks between coaching conversations or my time off. I'm able to put away clothing. I'm actually sorting clothes at the moment. and finish a few household tasks in order to ensure that, you comprehend, it makes me feel, you are aware, really nervous and stressed about finishing all of these tasks after working. In furtherance of trying to look after my kids when they are at home. In summary, there has been a significant positive influence overall. Some of you understand the importance of working for their benefit and taking advantage of everything they have to offer."

R4. Clarified that there is no strategy in place at the company to support work-life balance.

"There are just roughly 38 of us. Therefore, we don't necessarily have any initiatives or things you could find appealing, but we try our best to encourage work-life balance. However, I do believe that we should approach it with common sense. Indeed, we make an effort to avoid disturbing individuals on the weekends or during the evenings unless absolutely essential. However, I do believe so. On that note, I would rate us as approximately average."

R5. stated that culture plays a significant role in fostering contentment.

"Please, for our company, it begins with recruitment and creating a work-life balance-based culture. We don't just talk about balance between work and personal life; we also refer to mental health. First impressions are where it all begins. Everyone keeps emphasizing this throughout the time a worker is here, which might be in the form of comments, evaluations or activities to foster teamwork. I would like to put in place sure that everyone on this group is aware of the standards, not only regarding their duties they must do for the position but also regarding how they must take proper care of their own shortcomings. This initiates a precedent for our way of life. It simply is; in my opinion, it must be a fundamental part of who individuals become."

R6 released that

"Our manager is excellent at guaranteeing that she stays in touch with us. Not only are you aware of what's happening in terms of work, but you also ensure that we maintain a good balance. You are aware that we don't experience workplace stress. We don't worry about going home, and he's generally ahead of us in terms of being aware of and able to discern, I suppose perhaps we could temporarily concentrate on our home, or and I believe that the most of the staff members do a decent job of keeping a pulse on their population in terms of psychological wellness and, you understand understanding of battling, or perhaps not behaving as though they usually do"

R8 suggested that the business employ dialogue to encourage an optimal balance between work and personal life.

"We offer behavioral health seminars, handbooks for staff members, compensation guidebooks, more. During calls with supervisors and business owners, the firm president sets precedent by discussing how he makes use of his staff's support system for guidance. Since I also was struggling, it was quite helpful. The emphasis is on diligently working, but you ought to additionally play carefully and look after oneself. The owners of the business have a strong focus on family. They support that emphasis and advocate for families. The top brass and firm are curious concerning the families of its workers. Personnel are invited to join their children to games alongside other happenings, and they offer family-friendly activities."

2. Addressing Issues Related to Work-Life Balance

The second issue was driven by the participants' outspoken worries about the equitable nature of balance between life and work in work environments and the disparate effects it has on individuals. Promoting a harmonious relationship

between work and personal life can enhance interpersonal and business results, claim Wood *et al.* (2020). But what transpires if work-life balance-promoting programs and laws are applied unjustly or fail to achieve their goals? Throughout the viewpoints of seven individuals, the results reported under this topic reflect that tale: all but R3 mentioned having concerns about maintaining a balance between work and life.

R1 Voiced concerns about managers' displaying conduct that contradicts what they are saying.

"Thus, they emphasize the significance of maintaining a work-life equilibrium on a daily basis. Guys are still working -hour days, though. However, as previously mentioned, it is mechanistic in character and fails to address the human need for transparency and closeness with other people. I believe that relatively few businesses actually understand a balance between work and personal life. So what do we mean when we talk about life? It appears that we simply assume that taking time off equates to a healthy balance between work and private life. People are able to see straight through this."

R2 discussed the predicament faced by workers who do not have dedicated sick and regular leave.

"In order to minimize benefits for workers, the firm chooses to phrase it in that manner. They are unable to afford time off in case they become ill. They are unable to pay to be ill. They received sick pay for two days. All they receive is that. That's why it has a big impact on them. He needs to be ill, and you know, support that worker through difficult periods in life, when he may come across situations beyond his control, and not give him the impression that, as I observe a lot of these youthful guys, they are terrified to death of knowing they will lose their jobs if they miss duty due to illness, you understand. Take care of your staff members."

R3 expressed concerns about flexible schedules for employment and initiative equity.

"As for a healthy balance between work and life and free scheduling, I suppose those are things that will either need to be implemented internationally or in no way due to my opinion, people find it offensive when an organization is permitted to work really flexible schedules and someone isn't. Several of those partial days or holidays serve as an illustration of this. "

R4 expressed

"We are allotted sick days, but they are only good for sick days, for medical appointments, or for themselves or a family relative. They have very tight restrictions, though, so let's suppose my dearest buddy passed away. Since they are not members of my direct family, I would not be able to take time off to care for them either spending one of our two allotted holidays or an unpaid vacation. As I mentioned before, a lot of individuals take time off, but if they paid for time off in distinct ways, they wouldn't need to mislead, alter, or otherwise take advantage of the entire system."

P6 outlined the corporate policy for employees to take a Friday afternoon off each week.

"For instance, the general timetable modification has greatly raised spirits here. It is, I know, quite well-liked. I am also aware of our decreased productivity. It's hardly the

hippest thing to say, really. It's also true that, according to what you read online, people complete even more work in eight hours before the start of the workweek. From my own experience, we complete roughly four fifths of the job that we once did. I see things from a different angle, but most people don't work very hard on Saturday mornings because it feels more like Saturday at around 14:00"

Discussion of the Results.

Two topics emerged from the analysis of the people interviewed: (a) encouraging an equilibrium between work and personal life and (b) addressing issues related to work-life balance. The individuals who took part were outspoken in their worries about the equitable distribution of balance between work and life and the disparate effects it has on individuals. Challenges about balancing work and personal life in the companies they work for were mentioned by seven individuals. R2 voiced concerns about leaders' role modeling conduct that contradicts their points of view. R3 detailed the predicament faced by workers who are denied dedicated sick and routine vacations.

The worries that were expressed by those who participated were numerous and diverse. Considering there are so many different points of view, it can be difficult for enterprises to know how they can encourage a harmonious balance between work and life through promotional efforts. There are nonetheless a few important conclusions, though.

First, wherever feasible, firms should make sure that activities are carried out equally for every employee.

Second, because different programs target different populations, it's important to realize that diverse personnel require diverse strategies.

Third, company executives need to be aware of their influence on staff members and provide an example of behavior that encourages a harmonious relationship between work and personal life.

Fourth, since letting them benefit from the projects lowers morale among other staff members, executives must likewise hold staff members responsibly.

This study created a link between knowledge of how workers perceive strategic enterprise initiatives related to work-life balance and the body of available publications. As a result, a lot of businesses are developing plans and starting projects to hold onto people. Numerous retention strategies, for instance, include flexibilities that either create or strengthen a business advantage, such as remote job opportunities or a hybrid working environment that supports a harmonious relationship between work and life.

This investigation gives the company a competitive edge by offering insightful information about workers' experiences in determining how initiatives to promote work-life balance affect workers' general pleasure and persistence. Two overarching patterns surfaced from the findings analysis: (a) encouraging an equilibrium between work and personal life and (b) addressing issues related to work-life balance. Every attendee emphasized how crucial it is for their companies to support balance between work and life. R2, R4, R6, R7, and R8 discussed the ways in which their companies support a harmonious relationship between work and personal life. R1, R3, and R5, on the other hand, clarified that they and their companies weren't.

Recommendations

Through qualitative findings, this study offered firsthand experiences. Building on those, a quantitative study would examine what other firms are doing in the area of planning balance between work and personal life efforts, revealing even more concepts and best practices. To determine if it is advantageous to fund work-life balance initiatives, a quantitative analysis might compare businesses that have implemented these policies with those which have not.

A comparable study with a more than 8 respondents count might be investigated to enhance the concept of under investigation.

Conclusion

The research question was addressed through a data gathering procedure that involved semistructured interviews with eight different employees of for-profit businesses. Abidjan's population is diversified, as evidenced by the research participants. The continual contrast between the theme analysis by Percy *et al.* (2015)^[19] and the guide by Braun and Clarke (2006)^[6]. Respondents in this qualitative investigation were primarily concerned with (a) encouraging an equilibrium between work and personal life and (b) addressing issues related to work-life balance. Encouraging a balance between work and life might imply numerous different things. Modern approaches, for instance, include providing babysitting on-site, emphasizing general well-being, offering flexible work hours, promoting personnel to contribute to the community, and pushing back against work during relaxation.

The majority of those interviewed expressed gratitude to the investigators for granting them permission to take part in the investigation, saying that the questions forced them to consider their options and push themselves to go further in their organizations to support a healthy equilibrium between professional and private lives and enhance their company's competitive edge. Initiatives promoting a healthy balance between professional and private lives give businesses a competitive edge by demonstrating to workers their importance, sparking creative thinking, and fostering gratifying interactions with clients. Encouraged staff members who are treated with respect for the company and its clients provide a critical competitive edge.

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