

Work-Life Balance of Librarians in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study explored the Work-Life balance of Librarians in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The Population of the study consist of 362 librarians from twelve (12) public university libraries across the six states in South-South, Nigeria hence the total enumeration techniques was used. The primary instrument for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire. 337 librarians responded to the questionnaire given a response rate of 93.1%. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency count, mean, and standard deviation used to summarize and present respondents' demographic characteristics and responses to the questionnaire items. Findings revealed Librarians generally maintained a satisfactory work-life balance despite the challenges associated with workload and professional responsibilities. The study concludes that the work-life balance exert a significant influence on service quality with a favourable workplace conditions and employees' overall well-being. The combined influence of these variables highlights the need for university management to adopt an integrated approach to library administration by simultaneously improving workplace conditions, promoting employee welfare and strengthening institutional support systems. The study recommends that University management should continue to promote policies that support healthy work-life balance. Efforts should be directed toward equitable workload distribution, recruitment of additional qualified librarians and implementation of flexible work arrangements.

Keywords: Librarians, Libraries -Nigeria, Work-Life Balance, workplace psychology, Organizational factors

Introduction

Librarians, as information managers, support the research and academic accomplishments in any academic community, and the degree to which they are able to achieve could be linked to their overall well-being and level of job satisfaction. The work-life balance of librarians, who often have to juggle professional responsibilities with personal and family commitments, can be a significant factor in their overall well-being and job satisfaction. Onuoha et.al (2020) confirmed this when they declared that attaining a work-life balance that is healthy is essential for librarians, as it directly impacts their overall well-being and, in turn, the quality of service they provide to library users.

Balancing the demands of a professional career with personal responsibilities and leisure time can be a significant challenge for many librarians, especially those working in high-pressure university settings. Dodo, Bana and Dahiru (2024) noted that librarians who are able to effectively manage their work and home life tend to be involved in lesser stress levels, improved job fulfillment, and better mental health outcomes. Conversely, those who struggle to maintain a healthy work-life balance often report symptoms of exhaustion, such as emotional burnout and low self-worth. This results to low productivity which ultimately undermine the quality of service in university libraries (Olajide, 2020).

Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is essential for librarians to provide high-quality service. This means that librarians can effectively manage the responsibility that comes with the profession. As agreed by Demerouti and Arnold (2023), librarians must find ways to prioritize tasks, set boundaries, and allocate time between their jobs, families, hobbies, and self-care activities. Arthur (2024) also noted that effective time management is essential for librarians to attain a healthy work-life balance. This involves developing strategies to organize their workload, minimize distractions, and prioritize tasks. Librarians should also learn to delegate responsibilities, automate routine processes, and use productivity tools to maximize their efficiency and free up time for personal pursuits. Niebauer (2020) rightly stated that nurturing personal relationships outside of the workplace is necessary for librarians' well-being and work-life balance. This may include spending quality time with family, prioritizing social engagement that brings delight and satisfaction. By prioritizing their personal life, librarians can return to their professional duties feeling refreshed, motivated, and better equipped to provide high-quality service to their patrons.

A healthy work-life balance is essential for librarians to provide high-quality service consistently. Mensah and Adjei (2020) stated that “when librarians are able to manage their professional responsibilities while also attending to their personal needs and well-being, they are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and able to deliver exceptional service”. However, the demands of academic librarianship, with its long hours, heavy workloads, and often-inflexible schedules, can make it challenging for librarians to strike this balance. Factors such as the ability to take breaks, flexible work arrangements, and access to family-friendly policies can significantly impact a librarian's work-life balance. University administrators should prioritize the implementation of policies and programs that support librarians in finding this equilibrium, ultimately enhancing their overall well-being and service quality. To support librarians' well-being and enhance service quality, university administrators should implement policies and programs that promote work-life balance (Obinyan et. al, 2025).

Statement of the Problem

The study aims to understand the work-life balance of librarians in University libraries across South-South Nigeria. Existing research suggests that factors such as work trauma and lack of work-life balance can negatively influence the efficiency of service delivery of library staff. However, there is a paucity of empirical studies that have specifically examined these issues in the context of libraries in Universities in South-South region of Nigeria. Despite the critical role librarians play in supporting the educational needs of students and faculty, there has been limited research exploring the work-life balance of librarians. Understanding the challenges librarians face and how they impact on their ability to deliver high-quality services is essential for improving the overall experience and outcomes in university libraries across the country.

Understanding the work-life balance of librarians will play key roles in the quality of services provided in university libraries across Nigeria. This is because Librarians play crucial roles in supporting the academic and research activities of students and faculty, but their own well-being and work-life dynamics can greatly influence their ability to deliver high-quality services (Aiyebelehin et. al., 2020). Studies have highlighted the challenges faced by librarians, such as heavy workloads. These factors can lead to stress, burnout, and a decline in job satisfaction, ultimately affecting the quality of services provided (Omekwu & Echezona, 2020). While this studies have focused on these issues globally, there seems to be no significant empirical studies on Work-Life Balance (WL-B) of librarians in South-South Nigeria. Therefore this study seeks to fill this gap by providing insights into the

work-life balance of librarians. Understanding these relationships is crucial for developing strategies to support librarians and enhance the overall quality of library services in the region.

Research Question

What is the work-life balance of the librarians in University libraries in South-South, Nigeria?

Literature Review

Work-Life Balance of Librarians

Work-life balance is the capacity to harmonize career duties with individual and family commitments. Thus, achieving work-life balance is vital for librarians due to the demands of their profession, which include extended working hours and frequent interactions with students, lecturers and researchers (Durodolu, Ibenne & Osedo, 2020). However, lack of balance can result in stress, burnout, reduced job satisfaction and diminished service quality in university. On the contrary, Librarians who maintain healthy balance are more productive, motivated and satisfied in their roles to deliver efficient services (Anasi, 2020). Work-life balance (WLB) has been widely studied as a crucial factor influencing employees' productivity, mental well-being, and overall job satisfaction (Niebauer, 2020). In the context of university libraries, the ability of librarians to effectively balance their professional and personal lives significantly impacts the quality of services they provide. Eze (2021) stated that work-life balance refers to an individual's capacity to distribute sufficient time and energy between professional and personal responsibilities without one domain excessively intruding into the other. In university libraries, where librarians are tasked with multiple responsibilities such as cataloging, research assistance, collection development, and user support, sustaining balance amid professional demands and personal commitment is essential. Okonkwo and Edeh (2020) emphasize that work-life balance is a determinant of job satisfaction and overall service quality, as librarians experiencing high levels of work stress tend to provide suboptimal services to students and faculty.

One of the primary factors influencing work-life balance is the implementation of flexible work schedules. Flexibility in work arrangements, such as remote work, compressed workweeks, and flextime, allows librarians to better manage their professional duties while accommodating personal and family needs (Niebauer, 2020). Flexible work schedules are particularly beneficial for librarians with caregiving responsibilities, such as those with young children or elderly parents.

Dsouza (2021) indicated that access to flexible work arrangements is associated with reduced employee stress levels, higher job satisfaction, and improved overall well-being. However, the extent to which librarians can benefit from flexible work arrangements depends largely on institutional policies, technological infrastructure, and administrative support. In many university libraries, rigid work schedules remain a challenge, preventing librarians from fully leveraging flexible work models to enhance their work-life balance.

Another crucial aspect of work-life balance is the existence of leave policies and support systems. Kyumana (2021) emphasized the need for paid leave, such as sick leave, maternity leave, paternity leave and vacation time which will in turn play a vital role in enabling librarians to recharge and attend to personal obligations without experiencing undue stress. However, some librarians may face workplace cultures that discourage taking leave due to high workloads or fear of job insecurity, which can negatively impact their mental health. In addition to leave policies, organizational support systems such as counseling services, wellness programs, and employee assistance programs contribute to work-life balance by addressing work-related stressors and promoting mental well-being. Universities that invest in such support mechanisms create a healthier and more productive workforce, ultimately improving service delivery in University libraries (Odiachi, 2022).

Technology also plays a dual role in work-life balance. While technological advancements have facilitated remote work and increased efficiency in library services, they have also blurred the boundaries between work and personal life. The expectation for librarians to be available via email, virtual reference services, and digital platforms beyond regular working hours can create a sense of constant connectivity, making it difficult for them to disengage from work-related responsibilities (Anasi, 2020). Universities and library administrators must establish clear policies regarding digital communication and work expectations to prevent burnout and ensure that librarians can maintain a healthy balance between work and life.

Impact of Work-life Balance on Librarians service quality

Work-life balance (WLB) has become an essential topic in modern workforce discussions, particularly in knowledge-intensive sectors like librarianship. The ability to maintain equilibrium between professional obligations and personal responsibilities significantly impacts employees' well-being, job satisfaction, and overall productivity (Durodolu, Ibenne&Osedo, 2020). For university librarians, work-life balance is particularly crucial due to the demanding nature of their roles,

which often include extended working hours, continuous learning requirements, and the need to provide uninterrupted academic support to students and faculty.

In the context of librarianship, work-life balance is particularly important due to the nature of the profession. Librarians often engage in diverse responsibilities, including cataloging, research assistance, information retrieval, user support, and administrative duties. The demands of the job, coupled with long working hours, can pose challenges to maintaining a healthy work-life balance (Decker, 2021)). Librarians in university libraries, in particular, may experience heightened workloads during academic sessions, as they support students and faculty members in accessing academic resources. These increased demands can result in work-life conflicts if adequate measures are not in place to support their well-being.

Nwosu, (2023) stated that several factors influence work-life balance among librarians, including workload, institutional policies, work environment, and personal coping strategies. Research has shown that librarians who work in institutions with supportive policies, such as paid leave, child care facilities, and mental health programs, report higher levels of job satisfaction and lower stress level (Kavitha, 2024). Conversely, those in organizations with rigid work structures and inadequate support systems often struggle to balance professional and personal responsibilities. The implementation of wellness programs, employee assistance initiatives, and workload management strategies can significantly enhance work-life balance among librarians, ultimately leading to improved service quality in university libraries.

Eneh and Obioha (2022) stated that work-life balance is an essential component of employee well-being, with far-reaching implications for job performance, mental health, and organizational success. It requires a combination of institutional support, effective time management, and employee autonomy to achieve harmony between work and personal life. In the context of university libraries, ensuring work-life balance among librarians is crucial in enhancing job satisfaction, reducing burnout, and improving the overall quality of services provided to students and faculty members. Institutions must adopt policies and practices that promote work-life balance, recognizing its significance in fostering a healthy and productive workforce.

In university libraries, Anasi, (2020) believe that the concept of work-life balance is multifaceted, involving work flexibility, workload management, psychological well-being, and job satisfaction. Librarians often face challenges in maintaining this balance due to unpredictable work schedules, administrative demands, and research-related activities. Studies indicate that imbalance between work and personal life leads to burnout, decreased job performance, and overall dissatisfaction. Therefore,

the concept of work-life balance must be examined in the context of university librarianship, considering institutional policies, job expectations, and personal coping strategies (Mensah & Adjei, 2020).

Determinants of Work-Life Balance among Librarians

Kavitha (2024) found out that several factors influence the work-life balance of university librarians, including workload, work schedules, job autonomy, and organizational policies. University librarians often face extensive workloads that include cataloging, research assistance, information literacy training, and administrative duties. Excessive workload negatively affects employees' ability to balance work and personal responsibilities, leading to stress and job dissatisfaction. Work intensification, driven by technological advancements and digital library management, further exacerbates work-life balance concerns. When librarians are overburdened with work-related tasks, they often struggle to allocate quality time to their personal and family lives (Fatmawati, 2021).

Flexible work arrangements, including remote work and flexible working hours, have been identified as crucial factors in promoting work-life balance (Sasmita, Bijayalaxmi & Dillip, 2021). In academic libraries, where service provision often extends beyond regular office hours, flexible work schedules allow librarians to manage their time effectively. The adoption of digital resources and virtual assistance services has made it possible for librarians to work remotely, thereby enhancing work-life integration (Decker, 2021). Also, balancing work with family obligations remains a challenge for many librarians. Dodo et. al, (2024) found that librarians who struggle with family-related stressors tend to exhibit lower job commitment, thereby impacting service delivery in university libraries.

Mahendra (2023) proposed that organizational policies play a critical role in ensuring work-life balance among librarians. Institutions that offer paid leave, parental leave, and wellness programs tend to have more satisfied and productive employees. Ibegbulam and Ejikeme, (2021) agreed that in Nigeria, however, many university libraries lack formalized work-life balance policies, leading to prolonged working hours and employee burnout. Effective human resource policies, such as job-sharing, telecommuting, and compressed workweeks, have been recommended to enhance librarians' work-life balance (Oloyede & Soyemi, 2022).

Work-life balance significantly affects the mental well-being of librarians. Studies indicate that poor work-life balance is associated with increased stress levels, anxiety, and depression among academic staff (Durodulu, & Samuel, 2023). When librarians struggle to balance their professional and personal lives, they often

experience emotional exhaustion, which can lead to burnout. Conversely, a well-balanced work-life schedule enhances mental resilience, job satisfaction, and overall productivity. According to Kavitha (2024), employees with adequate time for personal activities exhibit higher engagement levels and better cognitive functioning at work. Thus, universities must prioritize policies that support work-life balance to foster a healthy work environment for librarians.

Research Methods

The study employed the descriptive survey research design to examine the work-life balance of librarians. The population of the study consisted of 362 librarians from twelve (12) public university libraries across the six states in South-South, Nigeria. The study used total enumeration techniques for this study given that the sample size of 362 is relatively small and manageable, allowing the researcher to collect data from every member of the population. The primary instrument for data collection in this study is a structured questionnaire, which is a commonly used tool for obtaining quantitative data in social science research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2023).

The collected data will be analyzed using Descriptive statistics, including frequency count, mean, and standard deviation will be used to summarize and present respondents' demographic characteristics and responses to the questionnaire items. The statistical analysis will be conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The distribution is presented in table 1:

Table 1: List of Public University Libraries in South-South Nigeria and Number of Librarians

S/N	Name of Public Universities	States	Number of Librarians
1	Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun	Delta	31
2	Delta State University, Abraka	Delta	30
3	Federal University, Otuoke	Bayelsa	21
4	University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State	Bayelsa	9
5	University of Benin	Edo	30
6	Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma	Edo	18

7	University of Calabar	Cross River	135
8	University of Cross River State	Cross River	10
9	University of Port Harcourt	Rivers	15
10	Rivers State University	Rivers	11
11	University of Uyo	Akwaiabom	26
12	Akwaiabom State University, IkotAkpaden	Akwaiabom	26
	TOTAL		362

Source: Institutional records.

Presentation of Results

The analysis and results are presented as follows:

Research Question: What is the work-life balance of librarians in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria?

The data presented in Table 2 reveal that librarians in university libraries in South-South Nigeria generally experience a satisfactory level of work-life balance. The findings indicate that respondents agreed that their work schedule allows them to maintain a good balance between their professional and personal lives ($M = 3.04$). They also agreed that they are able to disconnect from work-related responsibilities outside official working hours ($M = 2.93$), while their employers provide adequate support for work-life balance initiatives ($M = 2.84$). Furthermore, respondents expressed satisfaction with their current work-life balance and indicated that they are able to engage in self-care practices during workdays ($M = 2.76$).

In addition, the respondents agreed that they have sufficient time for personal activities and hobbies outside work ($M = 2.73$), although they acknowledged feeling overwhelmed by their workload ($M = 2.65$). They also agreed that their work schedule provides adequate time to spend with family and friends ($M = 2.64$). The overall mean score of 2.77, which exceeds the decision benchmark of 2.50, indicates that librarians in university libraries in South-South Nigeria generally maintain a satisfactory level of work-life balance. Although the overall result reflects a positive perception of work-life balance, the relatively lower mean ratings for workload and

time available for family and social engagements suggest that certain aspects of work-life balance require further improvement to enhance librarians' overall well-being and job satisfaction.

Table 1.2: Mean ratings and standard deviation of information on the work-life balance of librarians in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Rank	Decision
I feel that my work schedule allows for a good balance between work and personal life.	110	133	90	4	3.04	0.80	1 st	A
I am able to disconnect from work-related tasks outside of work hours.	90	157	69	21	2.93	0.85	2 nd	A
My work interfere with personal life	58	142	100	37	2.66	0.89	7 th	A
I have enough time for personal activities and hobbies outside of work.	70	128	118	21	2.73	0.86	6 th	A
My employer provides adequate support for work-life balance (e.g., flexible scheduling, telecommuting).	57	184	82	14	2.84	0.75	3 rd	A
I feel overwhelmed by workload	41	157	119	20	2.65	0.77	7 th	A
I am able to practice self-care during workdays	59	160	95	23	2.76	0.82	5 th	A
My work schedule allows for adequate time with family and friends	40	146	141	10	2.64	0.73	9 th	A
My work-life balance affects my overall well-being	51	137	129	20	2.65	0.81	8 th	A
I am satisfied with my current work-life balance	64	170	78	25	2.81	0.83	4 th	A
Overall					2.77	0.81		A

KEY: 3.5 – 4.0 – SA, 2.5 – 3.49- A, 1.5 – 2.49- D, Below 1.49 –SD

Discussion of Findings

The result revealed that librarians in university libraries in South South, Nigeria generally maintained a favourable work life balance. This was reflected in their perception that their work schedules allowed for a healthy balance between professional and personal life, their ability to disconnect from work related responsibilities outside official hours, the provision of adequate institutional support for work life balance, satisfaction with their current work life balance, opportunities to practice self-care during workdays, sufficient time for personal activities and hobbies, and adequate time to spend with family and friends.

The present finding is consistent with the study of Sasmita, Bijayalaxmi and Dillip (2021), who reported that the majority of librarians working in academic libraries in Odisha, India were satisfied with their work life balance and working conditions. The authors observed that librarians who experienced favourable working environments, career progression opportunities and supportive institutional policies were better able to balance their official responsibilities with family and personal commitments. Consequently, these employees demonstrated higher levels of job satisfaction and sustained productivity. Similarly, Mahendra (2023) found that a positive quality of work life, particularly in terms of interpersonal relationships and professional status, contributed significantly to librarians' job satisfaction. The study concluded that when employees perceived their work environment as supportive and rewarding, they were better positioned to maintain a healthy balance between their professional and personal lives.

Furthermore, this finding aligns with Kavitha (2024), who reported that academic library professionals generally perceived their work-life balance positively across different demographic groups. The study emphasized that maintaining equilibrium between work and personal life enhances employees' motivation and ultimately improves their job performance. Likewise, Ibegbulam and Ejikeme (2021) found that married female academic librarians in South-East Nigeria had a favourable perception of their work-life balance, particularly where organizational support, flexible work arrangements and improved remuneration were available. The researchers argued that institutional policies that promote work-life balance contribute to greater employee well-being and organizational effectiveness.

The interview findings provide valuable insight into the quantitative results. The participants explained that effective time management, adequate rest and the ability to establish clear boundaries between work and personal life were the major

strategies they employed to maintain a healthy work-life balance. However, they unanimously identified heavy workload as the greatest challenge to sustaining this balance. Despite this challenge, the respondents acknowledged that maintaining an appropriate balance between work and personal life contributes to sustained productivity and improved quality of library services.

The qualitative evidence helps explain why the respondents rated their work-life balance positively despite acknowledging the existence of workload pressures. It suggests that librarians have developed personal coping strategies that enable them to manage competing responsibilities effectively. At the same time, the interview responses indicate that institutional support remains essential for preventing excessive workload from undermining employees' well-being over time. This observation reflects the reality that work-life balance is influenced not only by individual time-management skills but also by organizational policies relating to staffing levels, workload distribution and employee welfare.

Nevertheless, the present finding differs from the report of Oloyede and Soyemi (2022), who found that although librarians in universities in South-West Nigeria experienced a moderate level of work-life balance, work-life balance significantly influenced their turnover intentions. The researchers argued that inadequate work-life balance increased employees' intentions to leave their jobs. The difference between that study and the present finding may be attributed to differences in the geographical location, institutional practices and organizational support systems across the universities investigated. Similarly, Durodolu and Samuel (2023) observed that librarians often experienced heavy workloads that affected their work-life balance, even though many respondents remained satisfied with their overall work conditions. This observation is comparable to the interview responses in the present study, where workload emerged as the principal barrier to achieving an ideal balance between work and personal life.

Conclusion

The study demonstrated that work-life balance exert a significant influence on service quality. This finding confirms that quality service delivery in university libraries cannot be explained by a single organizational factor. Rather, it is the outcome of the interaction between favourable workplace conditions and employees' overall well-being. The combined influence of these variables highlights the need for university management to adopt an integrated approach to library administration by simultaneously improving workplace conditions, promoting employee welfare and strengthening institutional support systems.

Recommendation

The study recommends that University management should continue to promote policies that support healthy work-life balance despite its insignificant independent influence on service quality. Efforts should be directed toward equitable workload distribution, recruitment of additional qualified librarians and implementation of flexible work arrangements.

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