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# Single-Parent Teachers' Work-Life Balance and Job Productivity in Edo State Public Senior Secondary Schools

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## Abstract

Work-life is believed to have either positive or negative effect on employees' job productivity especially among single-parent workers. The study investigated the relationship between single parent-teachers and their level of job productivity in public senior secondary schools in Edo State. To achieve this objective, four research questions were raised while three hypotheses were formulated therefrom. Two hundred and twenty-five single-parent teachers were purposively selected across the State-owned secondary schools in Edo State, Nigeria. Data were obtained through a structured questionnaire which was validated and tested for reliability level. The data collected were analyzed with the aid of descriptive and inferential statistics. Results obtained in the research indicated that single-parent teachers have low level of job productivity while their work-life balance was relatively less stressful. It was however found that there was no significant relationship between work-life balance and job productivity of single parent-teachers. Consequent upon this, it was recommended amongst others that school leadership should show more consideration to the personal and family needs of single-parent teachers especially; they should be innovative by using modern pedagogical tools for teaching and learning. Principals should step up their instructional supervisory roles, also, they should improve on their commitment to the welfare and working conditions of their staff members, especially the single parent teachers for improved job productivity.

**Keywords:** Single Parent Teachers, Work-Life Balance, Job Productivity, Edo State

## Introduction

Organizations irrespective of purpose and goals need human resources to drive their vision and mission. The effectiveness of the employees in the performance of organizational tasks is often times predicated on the volume of work assigned besides the supervisory skilled of the superordinate. Nevertheless, the productivity of employees—the labour force in organizations in the contemporary times is fundamentally associated with rational management of their personal needs and the organization's needs. In other words, workers should reasonably reconcile their personal home demands and organization's needs for them to be productive.

Work-life balance is therefore a critical issue to every employee at different levels; be it public or private organizations (Abioro, Oladejo & Asogbon, 2018). A conflict in work life balance will ultimately affect negatively the job output of a worker. Hence, Ojo, Salau & Falola (2014) warn that productivity of employees will be compromised in the long run if they do not properly manage their work life balance.

Attaining an effective work life balance among single parents in an organizations could be more challenging. Besides economic survival, they have psychological and social issues to contend with. The demography of personnel in modern organizations in contemporary times revealed that majority are single parents who occupy various positions. It is therefore of interest to investigate their work-life balance and level of productivity in their work place.

Secondary education in Nigeria occupies a very critical and strategic place in the learner's quest for knowledge, skills acquisition and functional training needed for enduring national growth and development. It serves as the connecting rod between primary and tertiary institutions (Belo, 2017). It is also an arm of the educational systems that consumes a great number of skilled labour force (teachers) used to realize curricular and pedagogical activities.

The productivity level of the teaching staff is of great significance to the goals of secondary education. The workforce at the secondary level of education in Edo State is characterized by staff members who have different family structure. Majority of them are single parents. It is therefore of importance to determine the relationship between single parent-teachers' work-life balance and job productivity in Edo State public senior secondary schools.

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- i. determine the level of job productivity of single parent-teachers in public senior secondary schools;
- ii. establish the difference in job productivity level of single-parent teachers based on location;
- iii. investigate the influence of single-parent teachers work-life balance on job productivity in Edo State public senior secondary schools; and to:
- iv. determine if there is a difference in relationship between single parent-teachers' work-life and job productivity based on gender.

### Research Questions

1. What is the level of single parent-teachers' job productivity in public senior secondary schools in Edo State?
2. Is there a difference in the level of job productivity between single parent-teachers in urban and rural public senior secondary schools in Edo State?
3. Is there a relationship between work life balance and job productivity of single parent-teachers in public senior secondary schools?
4. Is there a significant difference in the relationship between single parents' work-life balance and their job productivity based on gender in public senior secondary schools in Edo State?

### Hypotheses

While research question 1 was answered the rest were turned into null hypotheses as follows:

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the level of productivity between single parent-teachers in urban and rural public senior secondary schools in Edo State.

**HO<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between work-life balance and job productivity of single parent-teachers in public senior secondary schools in Edo State.

**HO<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the relationship between single parent-teachers' work-life balance and their job productivity based on gender in public senior secondary schools in Edo State.

## Theoretical Foundation

The theories upon which this study is anchored are: role theory, role conflict theory and spillover theory. The role theory addresses the personal conflict arising from the multiple roles an individual performs either as a spouse, parent, and employee or as an apprentice (Casheena, 2004). The theory explains that there are bound to be pressure as an individual grapple between satisfying his/her personal needs as well as the expectations demanded by an organization based on responsibilities.

According to Nabavi & Shahryari (2012), role theory predicts that multiple life roles result in inter role conflict as individual experience difficulty performing each role successfully because of conflicting demand. The dynamics of family structure has changed such that roles performance are no longer gender-based. A man is no longer a breadwinner, but may also play the role of a mother in some circumstances. Ditto, a woman no longer rears and raises children alone but also has the responsibility to working and fending for them. In a single-parent situation an employee lacks the opportunity of sharing the financial and domestic responsibility with a spouse. This theory therefore links works and family needs conflict to the amount of time an individual spend in home life and work place.

The role of conflict theory is an extension of role theory. The theory explains the simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other (Kahn, Wolde, Quinne, Snock & Rosenthal, 1964). The role conflict suggests that one role will take precedence over others and that there is a direct relationship between energy transfer from role to another (Greenhans & Beufell, 1985). It implies that if a single parent; male or female pays much attention to family needs, there might be a depletion of energy to assure the full responsibility for the work role as demanded. An attempt to find equilibrium between work and family could lead to role strains which might affect job productivity.

The spillover theory was postulated by Guest (2002). The theory asserts that work-life balance may have positive and negative impact on either work on the family life or the family life on the work. A negative spillover effect would result if work-family connections are strictly and rigidly designed in space and time (Abioro *et al.*, 2018). However, when there is flexibility that allows individual, in this case a single parent participate and combines family responsibilities with work duties effectively, it will bring about positive spillover. It is a kind of work life balance. A positive spillover could promote workers' productivity. Nevertheless, Robbins & McFadden (2003) state that a working single mother is prone to negative spillover. This could be as a result of the stress associated with her work life as a single parent such as and fear coping with family and financial constraints, rigid working hours, emotional stress arising from gap in family style and poor self esteem. The theory expects both the employee and organizational leaders to strike a perfect balance between work life and personal needs in order to achieve high level of job productivity.

## Reviewed Literature

### Work-Life Balance

There are plethora of definitions to the meaning of work-life balance but all translate to the equilibrium or degree of satisfaction an employee has in relation to his/her personal family life and career life. A perfect work-life balance can hardly be attained but the extent to which both an employee and organizational leaders can manage personal interest and while family interest as well as organization interest. Work-life balance is therefore the process of regulating the work designs to permit staff to join work with other duties like child care or aged family member (Upadhaya, Munir & Blount, 2004). According to Abioro *et al.* (2018), work-life balance is the aggregate time an individual uses to carry out his work in comparison with the aggregate time spent with relations and other individual's engagement. To attain an equilibrium between work and personal life, every organization should have a mechanism of maintaining optimum balance between job performance and personal lives of employees. In light of this, Reddy (2012) defines work-life balance as the relationship between work that an individual is being paid for and the lives individuals live outside of their paid employment.

For the purpose of this study, work-life balance can be viewed from an employee's perspective especially single parents as the act of fulfilling job responsibilities in a world of work while striving to cope with personal and family obligations. An organization like education institution would perceive work-life balance as the process of establishing a work schedule that is supportive towards staff in order to achieve high job productivity (Lockwood, 2003). Work-family conflict on the other hand, is the push and pull effect experienced between work and family responsibilities (Kumari, 2012). If this is not properly managed, it could have adverse effect on organizational goals attainment. However, there are work-life balance strategies that can be adopted for both organization and employees' benefit. They are:

- i. **Flexitime:** It is also referred to as self-rostering which covers flexible start and finish times with a possibility for employee to request specific working hours on a regular basis. It implies that flexitime enables an employee to negotiate their work schedules. Pierce & Gardner (2004) opine that a job that is flexible in nature will reduce workers' absenteeism and is capable of increasing level of job satisfaction among employees. However, not every job can have flexible working hours because of the nature of their activities. Example is teaching in a formal school system. Its curricular activities are planned according to time, space and programmes. However, online teaching may allow flexibility of time especially in period of pandemic.
- ii. **Telecommunication:** Telecommunicating allows a worker to work from home in order to achieve personal or family need without a negative effect on his/her work life. It is also known as telework. According to Yeandle, Crompton, Wigfield & Dennett (2002) cited by Abioro *et al.* (2018), it is a work-life balance strategy aimed at assisting employees to build their family and personal life around their work in order to reduce expenses related to work in a less disruptive and stress-free zone.
- iii. **Compressed work weeks:** It is a situation whereby a worker compressed work schedules with fewer, but longer workdays. This strategy allows more days without work to an employee, less commuting time but longer workdays (Banbram Whitehead, Sowden, Akers & Petticrew, 2008). Compressed work week might not be a strategy for work-life balance in an educational institutions because of the rigidity of their work plan and schedules of pedagogical activities.
- iv. **Part-time:** It is a way of reducing working hours in order to improve work-life balance. This approach favours individuals who are engaged in casual job unlike a full-time employment. However, this approach is capable of increasing workload, career growth and opportunities.
- v. **Job sharing:** Job sharing permits two or more workers to have an understanding of sharing responsibilities between and among themselves (Hayman, 2012). The purpose of job sharing is to enable workers meet their personal or family needs which sometimes conflict with their work life. A single parent who has pressing family and social needs may be ready to share responsibilities.

The performance and productivity of an organization is particularly influenced by work-life balance of the employee. As a result, organizations should always endeavour to reduce work-life conflict for a more balanced work-life that can stimulate high level of staff productivity.

### **Job Productivity**

In the parlance of an educational organization, productivity is the level at which all the teaching and learning inputs are used to produce the expected outcome. In other words, the extent to which the goals of the school are measured is dependent on the efficiency and effectiveness of the teachers and other supporting staff in the system. The responsibilities of employees in an organization is a measure of job productivity (Chris & Awonusi, 2004). Productivity simply means a measure of job performance. The commitment to the goals attainment of an organization determines an employee's level of productivity (Nakpodia, 2011).

Consequently, school organizations continually needs committed, dedicated and productive teachers for effective teaching and learning needed to bring about positive change in the society. However, Oswald (2012) is of the view that individual will contribute to the development of their organizations when they enjoy a work life balance. It suggests that a nexus exists between workers' productivity and their work-life balance. The leadership of every organization needs to strategically ensure that there are mechanisms toward ensuring employee's work-life balance.

## Single Parents

Single parent family structure is one of the recent changes in the ecology of family structure in the society today (Michelle, 2012 and Ketheringham, 2017). It is a kind of family where a person: either male or female lives or raises a child/children without a spouse. Single parenting according to Henslin (1985) is a situation in which a one of the two individuals, involved in the conception of the child is being responsible for the upbringing of the child. Single parenthood may also arise when either the male or female decides to produce and bring up a child or children outside wedlock.

In Nigeria, hitherto, single parenting was strange and unknown. Nowadays they are fast growing family patterns (Nwachukwu, 1998). As a result, many of such parents are employees in different organizations including educational institutions. This might pose a sort of double responsibilities requiring personal time, attention and money together with the challenge of official work responsibilities. Perhaps, this explains why Osagiobare (2017) succinctly remark that single parenthood is associated with variety of stress. Striking a balance between family and work-life could be stressful. Buttressing this assertion, Coleman (1997) states that the challenges of single parenthood are economic, human and social. According to Casheena (2004), economic capital refers to the financial resources and asset available to single parent families; human capital is the supportive role other family member like a spouse should provide which they lack and the social capital is the relationship that ought to develop among single parent families. This ought to be a psychological and emotional boost for productive work life.

Osagiobare & Alonge (2017) observe that single parents experience social problem as well as their children. Worker needs social cloud and recognition for a productive interaction among their colleagues. It will also improves their sense of belonging. It is imperative therefore, to state that the economic, human and social capital challenges often experienced by single parents could affect their job productivity. Organizations therefore have a responsibility to ensure a symmetric balance between a worker's family and work-life for improved and sustainable productivity. Staff rights and privileges such as vacation holidays, sick leave, and casual leave approval, and other benefits that could help ensure healthy and productive workers' job performance especially single parents' work force should be implemented. This study is therefore intended to establish the level of productivity of single parent teachers in post primary institutions in Edo State, Nigeria and to establish the relationship between their work-life balance and job productivity.

## Methodology

In view of the purpose of this study, a descriptive survey was adopted as the main source of data collection. The target population was all the single-parent teachers from a total of 8,436 teachers across the 309 public senior secondary schools in Edo State. The distribution of teachers across the three senatorial district in Edo State at the time of the study was: Edo North, 2,425; Edo South, 4,064 and Edo Central, 1,947 (Edo State Ministry of Education, 2019). A deliberate sampling technique was used to select 225 (male = 86; female = 139) single parent teachers which constituted the study sample. A questionnaire tagged: Single Parents Work-Life Balance and Teachers' Job Productivity Questionnaire (SPWLBTPJQ) was used to collect relevant data for the study. The questionnaire consists of two main sections: Section A and B. Section A contain demographic information of the respondents while section B was based on items relating to job productivity and work-life balance. The instrument was patterned along the 4 point Likert rating scale of Strongly Agree – 4; Agree – 3; Disagree – 2; and Strongly Disagree – 1. The instrument was validated by a senior academic staff in the Department of Educational Evaluation and Counselling Psychology, University of Benin and Chief Inspector of Education, Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. The Cronbach Alpha statistics was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument after a test-re-test of the instrument was administered on some single parent teachers who were not part of the main study. The  $r$  value of 0.87 was obtained and thus considered reliable. Data generated were analyzed with the aid of descriptive and inferential statistics.

## Results

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of single parents' work-life balance and level of job productivity

S/N	Items	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Criterion $\bar{x}$
<b>Work-Life Balance</b>					
1	The weekly breaks and terminal holiday enable me to attend to my personal family life	225	3.867	1.089	2.50
2	I am happy about my current working hours in the school	225	2.756	1.344	2.50
3	I wish to work from home	225	1.307	1.942	2.50
4	My extra-curricular assignments in school often conflict with my private life	225	2.243	1.861	2.50
5	I am bored by repetitive nature of my teaching job	225	2.231	1.615	2.50
6	I am willing to compress my teaching periods to enable me attend to my personal needs	225	2.631	1.582	2.50
<b>Average</b>			<b>2.505</b>		
<b>Job Productivity</b>					
7	Lesson notes preparation and delivery	225	2.143	0.476	2.50
8	Evaluation of students' learning processes	225	1.948	1.891	2.50
9	Management of students' disciplinary behaviour	225	2.741	0.576	2.50
10	Invigilation and supervision of examinations	225	2.571	1.304	2.50
11	Conduct of morning assembly	225	1.685	1.352	2.50
12	School community relationship	225	2.315	1.420	2.50
<b>Average</b>			<b>2.53</b>		
<b>Total Average Mean (<math>\bar{x}</math>)</b>			<b>2.369</b>		

Source: Researcher's field work (2020)

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of single parents' work-life balance and their level of job productivity in Edo State public senior secondary school. The total average mean of single parents' work-life balance and level of job productivity was computed to be 2.369 while the criterion mean was 2.50. Juxtaposing the two values, it reveals that the total average mean is lesser than the criterion mean which means that the level of work-life balance and job productivity of single parents was generally low.

However, table 1 also reveals that the work-life balance of single parents in public senior secondary schools was high with an average mean of 2.505 when compared against the criterion mean of 2.50. this implies that they experience a less conflict work-life balance.

## Test of Hypotheses

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the level of productivity between single parents in urban and rural public senior secondary schools in Edo State.

Table 2: Z – test analysis of job productivity level of single parents in urban and rural areas in Edo State

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	Z – value	P-value	Decision
Urban	123	18.26	2.21	323	1.84	.41	Accepted
Rural	102	13.41	2.14				

$P < 0.05$

The results of Table 2 shows the summary of Z – test analysis of job productivity level of single parent teachers in Edo State public senior secondary schools. The table presents a Z – value of 1.84 as productivity value between

the variables while p value is .41 which is greater than the significant level of 0.05. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the mean responses of single parents in urban and rural areas in relation to their level of productivity.

**HO<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between work-life balance and job productivity of single parents in public senior secondary schools in Edo State.

Table 3: Correlational analysis of single parents work-life balance and job productivity of single parents in public senior secondary schools in Edo State

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	R	p	Rank	Decision
Work-life balance	225	2.51		0.93	.03	Sig	Reject HO <sub>1</sub>
Job productivity	225	2.34					

P > 0.05

As presented in Table 3, there is a moderate and significant relationship between single parents' work-life balance and job productivity of senior secondary school teachers in Edo State ( $r(235) = 0.93$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ). Consequently, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between work-life balance and job productivity of single parent teachers in public senior secondary schools in Edo State is rejected.

**HO<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the relationship between single parent teachers' work-life balance and job productivity based on gender in public senior secondary schools in Edo State

Table 4: Fishers' Z – test of difference in the relationship between single parent-teachers' work-life balance and job productivity based on gender

Variables	N	r	Zr	Cal. Z	Crit. Z
Male	86	0.28	0.51	0.65	1.96
Female	139	0.83	0.82		

P < 0.05

As indicated in Table 4, male single parents have r value of 0.28 and transformed z value (Zr) of 0.51. While female single parent female teachers have r value of 0.83 and transformed Z value (Zr) of 0.82 thus yielding a calculated Z – value of 0.65 which is less than the critical Z – value of 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level. To this end, the hypothesis is retained. This suggests that there is no significant difference in the relationship between male and female teachers' work-life balance and job productivity in Edo State public senior secondary schools.

## Discussion of Findings

Findings in Table 1 indicates that the average mean of single parent teachers' work-life balance is 2.505, this implies that single parent teachers in Edo State public senior secondary schools do not experience serious conflict while meeting their personal needs as well as fulfilling their professional duties as practicing teachers. The finding therefore negates the opinion of Osagiobare (2017); Coleman (1997) that single parents express great stress and challenges in a bit to attaining work-life balance. With regard to the level of job productivity of single parent-teachers, findings in Table 1 however reveals that it is low. It suggests that single parent-teachers are not committed to the performance of their academic tasks and responsibilities. Teachers' job performance and commitment to goal attainment of the educational system has always been a major worry to education stakeholders. This perhaps justifies the reason why Nakpodia (2011) states that school organizations continually needs committed, dedicated and productive teachers for effective teaching and learning. Single parent teachers are not exempted from this noble responsibilities if secondary education must be functional and meaningful to the learners and the society.

In Table 2, the finding shows that there is no significant difference in the productivity level of single parent teachers in urban and rural areas. The finding further confirms the general apathy of teachers especially those who are single parents irrespective of their location to teaching as a profession. This has invariably affected their job commitment. Supporting this finding, Nwachukwu (1998) added that double responsibilities faced by single parents which requires time, attention and the crisis of financial obligations might account for their poor performances. Also, lack of support and assistance from a spouse in the face of economic challenges coupled with poor working conditions that characterized most schools in both rural and urban areas are probable reasons for job productivity of single parent teachers.

In Table 3 and 4, results of the analyses indicate no significant relationship between work life balance and job productivity of single-parent teachers; and no significant difference in the relationship between male and female single-parent teachers respectively. The findings agree with the postulation of Guest (2002) since teachers' productivity is very significant to school goals attainment, school leadership should endeavour to create a more satisfying work-life balance for its work force. School heads could adopt transactional leadership which can stimulate productive work-life balance among staff especially single parent-teachers in the system. Supervision, and punishment should be used to motivate teachers towards high job productivity.

The findings pose a challenge to the stereotyped and traditional mode of teaching and learning activities in Sub – Sahara Africa and Nigeria especially. The COVID – 19 experience coupled with socio-political; economic; cultural and religious crisis plaguing the society calls for innovation. The application of modern pedagogics, telework, compressed work weeks and job sharing practices could be adopted for the purpose of work-life balance and job productivity.

## **Conclusion**

Secondary school is a social system which consists of men and women (staff) of varied marital and demographic background who work cooperatively to achieve school goals. The study, therefore, investigates the relationship between work-life balance of single parent-teachers and their job productivity. Though there is no significant relationship between work-life balance and job productivity level of single parent-teachers, the study found that the job productivity level of teachers who are single parents is low. The study found that single-parent teachers however experience a relatively less conflict in their work-life balance.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the results of the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. School authorities should show more consideration to personal needs of their staff especially single parent teachers. This will increase their work-life balance and job satisfaction for a positive impact on their productivity level.
2. School leadership should introduce innovative pedagogical tools in schools such as telecommunicating, virtual teaching, zoom interactive teaching and the use of e-learning mode to complement physical teaching.
3. Policies that encourage improved work-life balance for single-parent teachers should be put in place by the State Post Primary Education Board. Such policies should allow job sharing, employment of single parents as part-time teachers. This will enable them have flexible time for the management of their personal and work-life activities.
4. Monitoring and supervision of instructional activities in schools by principals and other relevant stakeholders should be intensified for increased and sustainable job productivity of teachers especially those who are single parents.
5. Working conditions such as provision of teaching and learning facilities, regular payment of salaries and allowances, creation of social welfare schemes by government and school management board should be given priority. This will boost the psychological and emotional morale of single parent teachers.

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