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Exploring the Intercorrelation Between Perceived Stress, Motivation, and Work-Life Balance

A Case of Digital Experts in Lagos, Nigeria

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Abstract

The post-COVID-19 era has changed the mode of work for several organisations as some are now working remotely. This present study investigated the correlation between perceived stress, motivation, and work-life balance among digital experts in Lagos Metropolis. The study examined how their perception of stress, work-life balance, and motivation are related. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The sample size of the study comprised 101 digital experts within the Lagos metropolis using an online survey. Standardised instruments were administered online via Google Form, and data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of percentages to analyse participants' biodata and the research questions, while the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistical tool was used to test the stated hypotheses. The result of the findings showed there is a significant relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance; motivation significantly predicts work-life balance among digital experts; and demographic factors, specifically age, gender, and job role, significantly influence the work-life balance of digital experts. The researcher recommended that organisations should introduce stress management initiatives, such as mindfulness training, and workshops on coping strategies, to help employees manage stress effectively; and that organizations should create opportunities for employees to engage in meaningful and challenging work that supports their growth.

Keywords

Perceived stress, Motivation, Work-life balance, Digital expert

INTRODUCTION

Personal experience and armchair conversations have revealed that working remotely or hybrid with the use of technology can sometimes become very overwhelming, such that it affects one's work and personal life, and erodes the boundaries that once separated these two realms. Many people have realised that, if not intentional, the use of technology could bring a lot of mental and emotional stress, manifesting as anxiety, burnout, and emotional exhaustion, causing individuals to have a reduced drive to deliver on tasks or work, and undermining their motivation, creativity, and overall job satisfaction.

Furthermore, the constant connectivity and perpetual availability that technology demands can lead to a culture, where employees feel compelled to be responsive, and never truly disconnect from work-related tasks, ultimately affecting their ability to recharge, relax, and rejuvenate, and in the long run, impacting their ability to function as whole individuals in society, cultivate meaningful relationships, and pursue activities that bring them joy, fulfilment, and a sense of purpose.

The use of technology can be complex. As it enables remote workers to stay connected with colleagues, access information, and complete tasks efficiently. On the other hand, it can lead to technostress, characterized by feelings of anxiety, burnout, and exhaustion.

The digital revolution has improved the way people work, communicate, and socialise. Digital experts, including software developers, graphic designers, digital marketers, and other professionals, play a crucial role in shaping the digital landscape. However, the demands of working in the digital industry can take a toll on their well-being, particularly in urban centers like Lagos metropolis. Jonathan Gershuny, in his research work in 2003 titled “The evolving relationships between work, leisure, and the changing landscape of social and economic life in post-industrial societies”, explored how technological advancements, particularly in communication and information technology, affected work-life balance and leisure activities.

Following the COVID-19 era, most companies and businesses have had to introduce the hybrid workspace to keep their businesses afloat. The COVID-19 pandemic encouraged people to avoid physical contact to prevent the spread of the virus, further pushing for the acceptance of virtual work to make things easy for everyone (WHO, 2022).

The hybrid workspace has also created new challenges for digital professionals, including the need to manage work-life boundaries, deal with social isolation, and maintain productivity in the absence of physical office space activities (Rathi 2024).

The world is now a global village, and companies and businesses are hiring people globally while still achieving their goals (Friedman, 2005). This has led to a diverse and dispersed workforce, where employees are working across different time zones, cultures, and languages. The hybrid workspace has become the norm, and it is essential to investigate how this new normal is affecting social interaction and work psyche (Golden & Veiga, 2005).

Work as we know it has evolved over the years. Starting from just men going to work while women stay home and care for the family, to every member of the family contributing their quota to the growth and stability of the family (Hochschild, 1989). These days, even children can contribute their quota to the finances of the family either through endorsement deals or modelling and advertising contracts. This shift has created new opportunities for people to work on their own terms, but it has also created new challenges, including the need to manage uncertainty, deal with isolation, and maintain work-life boundaries.

In the age of rapid technological advancement, virtual work environments have become increasingly common. The commonality of it is then raising concerns about the possible impact of it on the motivation and work-life balance of employees in the digital sector. There seems to be a perception that working remotely the using technology for work can bring a lot of stress, which could in turn affect motivation and eventually render the worker unable to maintain relationships with the people in his/her life. This flexibility, while beneficial, also introduces challenges.

One of the key issues with virtual work is that work and home responsibilities become intertwined, reducing the ability of workers to continue working even when it is not work time (Wang et al., 2021). This has been particularly problematic in Nigeria and in other societies, where digital experts often work late into the night to meet client demands or collaborate with global teams in different time zones. As a result, virtual workers experience constant connectivity, which increases emotional exhaustion and diminishes opportunities for recovery and personal fulfilment (Kreiner et al., 2009).

Stress and demotivation are growing concerns among remote workers, especially digital professionals. Stress levels have been linked to overwork, poor time management, and feelings of isolation, which are commonly associated with virtual work environments. On the other hand, a lack of extrinsic rewards such as recognition or financial incentives can further exacerbate frustration and dissatisfaction (Gagné & Deci, 2005).

Work-life imbalance is a current psychological construct that is vital to virtual workers, as the home space becomes a permanent extension of the office. In Nigeria, where cultural expectations emphasise family involvement and social interactions, workers may experience greater pressure to juggle professional and personal obligations (Adisa et al., 2021). When individuals struggle to manage these competing demands, there might be issues with their overall well-being and quality of life (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). As the hybrid workspace becomes the norm, it is essential to investigate how this new normal is affecting social interaction and work psyche.

CURRENT STUDY

The rapid transformation of the workplace due to the digital revolution, coupled with the shift to hybrid workspaces and the rise of the gig economy, has created a complex set of challenges for digital professionals. The boundaries between work and one's life have increased uncertainty, and create social isolation, which has implications for the overall well-being of digital professionals, ultimately affecting their productivity, job satisfaction, and overall quality of life. Therefore, it is important to investigate the relationships of these changes on digital professionals and to identify strategies for mitigating the negative effects and promoting their well-being. The study seeks to investigate the level of perceived stress among digital experts and the direct or indirect impact of it on their motivation and their ability to maintain a balance between their work and their personal lives. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between perceived stress, motivation, and work-life balance among digital experts in Lagos.

Challenges in Measuring Work-Life Balance

1. **Subjectivity:** Individual perceptions vary based on personal values, job roles, and family structures.
2. **Cultural Influences:** Norms around work and family vary globally, influencing how balance is experienced and reported.
3. **Dynamic Nature:** Work-life balance changes over time, requiring longitudinal assessment for accurate measurement.

Hence, work-life balance is a multidimensional construct with serious implications for employees' overall well-being and organisational performance. Through effective measurement tools like the Work-Life Balance Scale, organisations can better understand employee needs and implement targeted strategies to promote a healthy balance between work and life responsibilities.

Programs reported improved employee satisfaction and reduced stress levels (Ogunleye & Osekita, 2016)

Workplace Stressors

A study by Echee & Eze (2018) identified key stressors in Nigerian workplaces, including heavy workloads, poor leadership, and limited career progression opportunities. Ajayi. (2018) found that professionals in high-pressure industries like banking and IT experience higher stress levels, often leading to physical and mental health issues.

The rise of virtual work environments has introduced "technostress" as a significant concern. Okafor and Ugwu (2017) found that excessive reliance on technology for communication and task management in remote work settings increased stress levels among Nigerian professionals. Additionally, the pressure to remain constantly available due to digital connectivity created stress and eroded personal time (Adisa et al., 2021).

Studies, such as those by Adekeye (2024), revealed that Nigerian professionals employ various coping strategies, including social support, religious practices, and organisational interventions, to mitigate stress. However, limited access to formal mental health services often leaves employees relying on informal coping mechanisms, which may not adequately address underlying issues (Olajide et al., 2014). Research by Aina et al. (2011) explored gender disparities in stress levels, finding that Nigerian women face unique stressors due to balancing professional and domestic responsibilities. Men often experience stress as societal expectations toward them as breadwinners have been seen as the primary breadwinners, compounded by financial pressures (Ogunlana 2013).

Global research highlights that virtual work environments have unique impacts on stress, motivation, and work-life balance. While developed countries often benefit from robust policies and infrastructure, challenges like technostress, role overload, and work-life imbalance are more pronounced in developing nations. Further research is necessary to understand these dynamics and develop tailored interventions.

Underrepresentation of Lagos-Based Digital Experts

Research on digital work environments in Nigeria often emphasises broader organisational or infrastructural issues without specifically addressing digital experts' unique experiences. Digital professionals in Lagos face distinct pressures, including high client expectations, technology dependence, and inconsistent power supply and internet connectivity. These challenges, coupled with cultural and socio-economic factors, remain underexplored in academic literature.

METHOD

The target population for this study comprises digital professionals working both remotely and on-site within the Lagos metropolis. These professionals represent individuals whose roles require extensive engagement with digital tools and technologies in various industries. Key Characteristics of the Target Population Professionals in Digital Roles: includes IT specialists, software developers, graphic designers, digital marketers, data analysts, and similar professionals. Their work often involves project-based tasks, client interaction, and reliance on technology.

Work Settings: Individuals working remotely or in hybrid models (combination of remote and on-site work). Their work schedules and environments are shaped by the digital nature of their roles. The study adopts a stratified random sampling method, which ensures fair representation of various job roles within the digital workforce. This approach divides the target population into subgroups (strata) based on key characteristics such as job role or industry (e.g., IT, marketing, content creation). Within each stratum, participants are randomly selected to achieve a balanced and representative sample. Quantitative Research Design, specifically the Convenient Sampling Technique, was adopted.

To ensure efficient and comprehensive data collection, the study employs an online questionnaire distributed through various digital channels. This method is particularly suited to the target population of digital experts, who are accustomed to online communication tools.

Use stratified sampling to select participants from diverse job roles (e.g., IT specialists, digital marketers, and content creators). Source participants through professional networks, industry groups, and organisations within the Lagos metropolis.

Distribution Channels

Email: Distribute the questionnaire directly to participants via email, leveraging professional contact lists and industry directories.

Social Media Platforms: Share the questionnaire link on platforms commonly used by digital professionals, such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and WhatsApp groups. Target professional groups and communities to reach a concentrated audience of digital experts.

Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used for data analysis. The biographic information of the participants was analysed using frequency counts and percentages, while responses to the items in the research instrument were analysed using a frequency table, percentage, mean and standard deviation. However, the Pearson product-moment correlation statistical tool was used to test the research hypotheses. The data analysis was done with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The questionnaire contains the study's purpose, anonymity, and voluntary participation.

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Table 1 Demographic Description of the Participants

	Frequency	Percent
18-25	33	32.7
26-35	49	48.5
36-45	17	16.8
46-55	2	2.0
Total	101	100.0
Female	38	37.6
Male	63	62.4
Total	101	100
Freelance	1	1.0
(NGO)	3	3.0
Private Sector	67	66.3
Public Sector	5	5.0
Self-employed	25	24.8
Total	101	100.0

Table 1 shows that 33(32.7%) of the respondents were between 18-25 years of age, 49(48.5%) of the respondents were between 26-35 years of age, 17(16.8%) of the respondents were between 36-45 years of age while 2(2%) of the respondents were between 46-55 years of age. Hence, most of the respondents were between 26-35 years of age. It also shows that 38(37.6%) of the respondents were female, while 68(62.4%) of the respondents were male. This implies that most of the respondents were male.

The table indicate that 1(1%) of the participants are freelancers in the employment sector, 3(3%) of the respondents were Non-governmental Organization (NGO) in the employment sector, 67(66.3%) of the respondents were working in the private sector, 5(5%) of the respondents were working in the public sector while 25(24.8%) of the respondents were self-employed. This indicates that the majority of the respondents were working in the private sector.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: There is a significant relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance.

Table 2 Relationship Between Perceived Stress and Work-Life Balance

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	SD	N
Perceived Stress	20.1875	4.78590	101
Work life Balance	20.0842	4.46188	101
Correlations			
		Perceived Stress	Work life Balance
Perceived Stress	Pearson Correlation	1	.430**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	101	101
Work life Balance	Pearson Correlation	.430**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	101	101

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

A Pearson product-moment correlation was run to determine the relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance. Findings showed that there was a positive relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance. It then means that there is a significant relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance.

Hypothesis Two: Motivation significantly predicts work-life balance among digital experts.

Table 3 Relationship between Motivation and Work-Life Balance

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Motivation	20.2500	4.40368	101
Work life Balance	20.0842	4.46188	101
Correlations			
		Motivation	Work life Balance
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	1	.681**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	101	101
Work life Balance	Pearson Correlation	.681**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	101	101

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A Pearson product-moment correlation was run to determine the relationship between motivation and work-life balance. Findings showed that there was a positive relationship between motivation and work-life balance; the null hypothesis, which says that motivation does not significantly predict work-life balance among digital experts, is rejected. It then means that motivation significantly predicts work-life balance among digital experts.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study thus reveal a relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance; it shows a statistically significant relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance. This simply implies that elevated levels of perceived stress are inversely related to work-life balance, suggesting that as stress increases, the ability to maintain a stable work and personal life reduces. This agrees with a study by Shockley & Singla (2011) who reported a positive relationship between work-life balance and perceived stress among selected participants in Ireland. This indicates that individuals experiencing higher work-life balance also reported higher levels of perceived stress, a finding that contrasts with the commonly held assumption that better work-life balance correlates with lower stress levels. The study also revealed that work-life balance could predict levels of perceived stress, accounting for 26% of the variance in stress levels among participants. The finding also agreed with a study by Amstad et al. (2011) focusing on married and unmarried working women highlighted a significant negative correlation between perceived stress and work-life balance. This study revealed that higher perceived stress was associated with lower work-life balance, with married women experiencing higher stress levels and lower work-life balance compared to their unmarried colleagues. This practically means that marital status may affect the dynamics between stress and work-life equilibrium.

These findings show a complexity in the relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance. As expected, that improved work-life balance leads to reduced stress, and individual perceptions and contextual factors play a crucial role in this dynamic. Factors such as job demands, personal responsibilities, and support systems can modulate how work-life balance impacts perceived stress. Therefore, interventions aimed at enhancing work-life balance should also consider strategies for stress management, taking into account individual differences and contextual variables to effectively mitigate stress and promote overall well-being.

Motivation and Work-Life Balance among Digital Experts

The result of the stated hypothesis on motivation significantly predicts work-life balance among digital experts, showing that motivation has a significant impact on the work-life balance among digital experts sampled in this study. This highlights the critical role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors in shaping the equilibrium between professional and personal life. For digital experts, who often operate in dynamic, high-pressure environments with blurred boundaries between work and personal life, motivation reveals the determinant of humans' ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance (Gagné & Deci, 2005).

Another position for the predictive relationship between motivation and work-life balance is that motivated individuals are well equipped to set their focus on their tasks and prioritise effectively. Digital experts who have a sense of purpose or passion for their work may be more adept at managing their workload and avoiding burnout, as they derive satisfaction from their professional achievements (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Conversely, those who lack motivation may struggle to maintain focus and productivity, leading to longer work hours and unstructured personal time, thereby disrupting work-life balance (Schaufeli et al., 2009). Additionally, extrinsic motivators, such as recognition and rewards, can enhance job satisfaction and reduce stress, further contributing to a healthier balance between work and personal life (Locke & Latham, 2002). The finding is also in conformity with another study by Kossek, Valcour and Lirio (2014), which demonstrated that digital experts with high intrinsic motivation are more likely to experience a harmonious work-life balance. This is attributed to their deep engagement and enjoyment in their tasks, which can lead to efficient time

management and a reduced perception of work-related stress. Their finding further indicate that research indicates that when individuals are intrinsically motivated, they tend to organise their work more effectively, allowing for a clearer separation between work and personal life, thereby enhancing work-life balance.

The flexibility in many digital professions can amplify the positive effects of intrinsic motivation on work-life balance. This autonomy not only fosters a sense of control but also contributes to increased job satisfaction and a more balanced lifestyle. Organisations employing digital experts should prioritise fostering a motivational work environment by providing opportunities for skill development, recognising employee achievements, and promoting a culture of autonomy and flexibility. Such measures can promote intrinsic motivation and empower employees to manage their work-life balance more effectively (Kossek, Valcour & Lirio, 2014).

Therefore, the significant predictive relationship between motivation and work-life balance among digital experts shows the importance of encouraging both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors in the office space. By enhancing motivation, organisations can support their employees in achieving a healthier work-life balance, leading to improved well-being, job satisfaction, and productivity. Future research should explore the specific motivational strategies that are most effective for digital experts, as well as the potential moderating effects of personality traits and coping styles on this relationship.

It is unsurprising that gender also emerged as a significant predictor of work-life balance among digital experts, consistent with prior research that highlights the challenges of doubling as a mother in balancing work and personal life (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Women, particularly those with caregiving responsibilities, often report more conflict between work and family roles, leading to higher levels of stress and poorer work-life balance (Michel, Kotrba, Mitchelson, Clark, & Baltes, 2011). This is further exacerbated in male-dominated fields like technology, where women may face additional pressures to conform to workplace norms that prioritise long hours and constant availability (Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer & King, 2002). On the other hand, men may experience different but equally significant challenges, such as societal expectations to prioritise career success over personal life, which can also negatively impact their work-life balance (Livingston & Judge, 2008).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study has added to the understanding of the dynamics in the factors that influence work-life balance among digital experts. The significant relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance underpins the impact of stress on an individual's ability to maintain equilibrium between professional and personal life. High levels of perceived stress can lead to cognitive overload, emotional exhaustion, and difficulty in setting boundaries, all of which disrupt work-life balance. This highlights the importance of addressing stress through organisational interventions, such as stress management programs and flexible work arrangements, as well as individual strategies like mindfulness and time management techniques. By mitigating stress, both organisations and employees can promote a work-life balance, ultimately enhancing well-being and productivity.

Consequently, the finding that motivation significantly predicts work-life balance emphasises the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors in how digital experts manage their professional and personal lives. Motivated individuals are better equipped to prioritise tasks, set boundaries, and derive satisfaction from their work, which contributes to a more balanced lifestyle. Organisations can leverage this insight by creating a work environment that nurtures motivation through recognition, skill development, and autonomy. For digital experts, cultivating self-motivation through goal-setting and self-assessment can further enhance their ability to achieve work-life balance.

Finally, the significant influence of demographic factors, gender, and job role on work-life balance revealed the nuances and inclusive approach to addressing work-life challenges. Age-related differences suggest that younger employees may require additional support in managing work-life balance, while older employees may benefit from leveraging their experience to maintain equilibrium. Gender disparities, particularly the additional challenges faced by women in balancing work and caregiving responsibilities, call for targeted policies such as flexible work arrangements and childcare support. Additionally, the varying demands of different job roles, especially leadership positions, necessitate tailored strategies to help employees manage their responsibilities effectively. Recognising these demographic influences enables organisations to design interventions that address the needs of employees at various levels and promote a more inclusive and supportive workplace culture.

Overall, these findings collectively emphasise the interconnectedness of psychological, motivational, and demographic factors in shaping work-life balance among digital experts. By addressing perceived stress, motivation, and considering demographic differences, organisations can enable individuals to achieve a sustainable balance between their professional and personal lives. More research is required to explore these relationships in greater depth, particularly in the context of evolving work environments and emerging technologies, to develop more effective ways for promoting work-life balance in the digital age.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The study has several implications for organisations, policymakers, and digital experts in Lagos Metropolis, a rapidly growing hub for technology and innovation. The significant relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance underscores the need for organisations in Lagos Metropolis to prioritise stress management initiatives. Given the high-pressure nature of the digital industry, companies should implement programs such as stress management workshops,

mental health support services, and wellness initiatives to help employees cope with stress. Flexible work arrangements, such as remote work options and flexible hours, can also reduce stress by allowing employees to better manage their professional and personal responsibilities. Additionally, fostering a supportive workplace culture that encourages open communication and provides resources for stress relief can help employees feel more in control of their work-life balance. For digital experts in Lagos, where traffic congestion and long commutes are common, offering remote work options could significantly reduce stress and promote overall well-being.

Also, the finding that motivation significantly predicts work-life balance highlights the need to create a work environment that motivates intrinsically and extrinsically. Organisations in Lagos Metropolis can enhance motivation by recognising and rewarding employee achievements, providing opportunities for professional development, and promoting a sense of purpose and autonomy in the workplace. For digital experts, who often thrive on innovation and creativity, offering challenging projects and opportunities for skill-building can boost intrinsic motivation. Additionally, organisations should encourage employees to set personal and professional goals, as goal setting has been shown to improve motivation and work-life balance.

Also, the influence of demographic factors on employees' lives must not be downplayed, it is important that inclusive workplace policies that consider the diverse needs of employees be taken into consideration. Organisations in Lagos Metropolis should adopt a holistic approach to work-life balance by offering a range of support systems, such as employee assistance programs, wellness initiatives, and diversity and inclusion training. This is particularly important in a culturally diverse city like Lagos, where employees may face unique challenges related to gender roles, family expectations, and socioeconomic factors.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted exclusively within Lagos Metropolis, an urban environment characterised by unique work demands and lifestyle dynamics. As a result, the findings may not be generalizable to digital experts in other regions or rural settings, where work-life balance challenges and motivational drivers might differ. The cultural and socioeconomic context of Lagos could also influence the outcomes, thereby limiting the broader applicability of the results.

Lastly, the study utilised standardised scales to measure perceived stress, motivation, and work-life balance. While these scales are reliable and widely used, they may not fully capture the complexity of these constructs within the context of digital work.

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