

# Impact of Virtual Work on Employee's Wellbeing: Evidence from Service Industry in Nigeria

<sup>1</sup>Solomon Adejare BABARINDE, PhD., <sup>2</sup>Joy Ojochenemi OCHOLI., <sup>1</sup>Juliana Olufisayo ADEKUNLE

<sup>1</sup>Department of Management and Accounting, Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Department of Business Administration, Redeemer's University, Ede, Nigeria

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2024.1109058>

Received: 25 September 2024; Accepted: 30 September 2024; Published: 08 October 2024

## ABSTRACT

Digitalisation has made it possible for work to be done outside of the seven-to-five workday and outside of the physical limits of the workplace. Employees' and employers' relationships are changing due to the digitalisation of work. This has a profound effect on the way people view their lives. The COVID-19 outbreak has encouraged those who could do their job remotely using digital technologies. Working from home impacts the workplace resources accessible to workers and the wellbeing of their colleagues and superiors. This study examines the impact of virtual work on the employee wellbeing of selected organisations in the Nigerian service industry. The survey research design was employed where four hundred and eighty-six respondents were sampled using a structured questionnaire. The ordinary Least squares regression technique was used to analyse the interactions among the study variables. The findings reveal that virtual work significantly influences employees' emotional exhaustion, psychological wellbeing and work-life balance. Based on the findings, the study concludes that virtual work is a key driver of employee wellbeing in the Nigerian service industry. The study recommends that human resources managers and relevant stakeholders in the service industry maintain a proper mix of employees' remote working and physical presence in the office.

**Keywords:** Virtual Work; Emotional Exhaustion; Psychological Wellbeing; Work-life Balance

## INTRODUCTION

According to studies, the number of people's virtual work is on the rise and this trend is projected to continue (Graves and Karabayeva, 2020; Alexandar et al., 2021; Karl and Peluchette, 2022). Based on the premise that work does not have to be done in a physical place, remote work is a strategy that enables workers to work outside of the conventional office environment, wherever they are efficient, and that promotes an excellent work-life balance (Muzee et al., 2021). When balancing work and personal responsibilities, employees have a fair amount of leeway in determining how they spend their time (Wang et al., 2021). Several academic works have used virtual working to characterise the practice of working from a distance using electronic communication (Stich, 2020; Mostafa, 2021; Prestch, 2021). The virtual work phrase refers to a remote employment arrangement in which employees are not required to go to a central place to complete their job (Kauffeld, 2022). This allows workers more freedom regarding when and where to complete their work. Telecommuting, Teleworking, e-working, and remote work relate to the same thing: an employee's capacity to do work outside of the traditional office setting while maintaining regular contact with coworkers and management through electronic means (Yarberry and Sims, 2021). The phrase agile working has recently been introduced to describe a company's capacity to adapt to the market's needs and modify its operations appropriately (Adisa et al., 2021).

Accordingly, the present research will concentrate on virtual work as a tactic to counteract the pandemic. Previous research has shown that remote work has positive and negative effects on employees (Efimov et al., 2020; Nyberg et al., 2021; Shamsi et al., 2021). On the positive side, it can help individuals improve their work-life balance and create a positive environment and commitment (Pattil et al., 2020). On the negative side, it can cause employers to lose talented workers who would otherwise be unable to pursue their interests outside of the office (Chamakiotis et al., 2021). Several studies (Graves and Karabayeva, 2020;

Alexandar et al., 2021; Adamovic et al., 2022; Karl and Peluchette, 2022) have shown that workers are prepared to leave their current jobs for another position that provides virtual work advantage due to the increased production efficiency, cost savings of office rent, power generation, public liability, office supplies, servicing costs, and infrastructural facilities, and reduced time spent commuting. Second, despite the numerous advantages noted above, other findings suggest that working from home could be demanding for several workforces compared to working in the workplace, as asserted by Yadava et al. (2020) and Wilson (2021), who claimed that virtual work could lead to poor wellbeing, information sharing overburden, workload pressure, and office stresses (Grant et al., 2019).

Resultantly, virtual work may become disadvantageous in some instances when people enhance their job tasks (Toth et al., 2020), introducing the emotional responses of being disconnected and not linked with colleagues and the desire for new and unique abilities and viewpoints to excel as a remote worker (Graves and Karabayeva, 2020; Alexandar et al., 2021; Karl and Peluchette, 2022). Based on a literature review, it is established that the effectiveness of virtual teams (Chanana, 2021), telework characteristics (Unsworth, 2020), virtual leadership (Weigelt et al., 2021), elements of building cooperation, efficient communication (Miron et al., 2021), and psychological stress and worry (Adamovic et al., 2021) are critical to organisational performance. It is possible to virtual work and helps address issues of ageism, sexism, and income disparity in Nigeria (Adisa et al., 2021). Although other researchers have looked at the effects of remote work on employees' well-being in the information technology industry (Weigelt et al., 2021), in addition to the use of telework in Lithuania (Miron et al., 2021) in developed and emerging economies, the extent to which it drives the service industry in Nigeria is still a concern. The choice of the service industry is influenced by the fact that it is the mainstream of the Nigerian economy (Adisa et al., 2021). This study will focus on evaluating employees' wellbeing based on Virtual work. The following specific objectives were raised;

- i. Examine the impact of virtual work on employee's emotional exhaustion in the Nigerian service industry
- ii. Evaluate the impact of virtual work on employee's psychological welling in the Nigerian service industry
- iii. Investigate the iimpact of virtual work on employee's work-life balance in the Nigerian service industry

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Virtual Work

Virtual units must be created in line with a well-articulated organisational plan to accomplish goals and improve performance over time with the changing dynamics in the business environment (Ritcher, 2020). The correlation between virtual work and strategic responses is an intense research interest (Adamovic et al., 2022). Firms must make ongoing strategic choices to attain and maintain a competitive advantage in light of the challenge of few resources. According to Singh et al. (2022), when an organisation chooses the virtual work strategy, it locks itself into a specific set of resources, products, technology, and markets for the foreseeable future. With the help of the virtual strategy development process, an organisation may better align its internal resources with the possibilities and hazards present in its external environment (Gabr et al., 2021). Virtual work strategy is introduced due to the difficulties from the organisation environment's volatility, internal capabilities and competition (Shaik et al., 2020).

Half of the organisations surveyed by Mihalache and Mihalache (2022) show that more than 80% of their employees worked virtually due to COVID-19 and during the early phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, and they predicted significant long-term growth for remote work when the epidemic ended. Millions more employees are still working from home, although COVID-19 have exacerbated current remote work trends made possible by the proliferation of connection and communication technology (Adamovic, 2022). While working from home is more general since it may encompass not only home but anywhere away from the office, we do know that certain people, such as professionals who need to carry out sophisticated activities that involve minimal contact with peers, really prefer and are more efficient if they were working from home (Green et al., 2020)).

However, many people struggle when they try virtual work because of basic concerns such as not having a

dedicated location (Brachten et al., 2020). Employees who live in shared quarters have additional issues beyond those of single workers, such as the need to respect the personal space of their roommates (Gigauri, 2020). It is difficult for employees to separate their professional and personal lives (Day et al., 2019). As if that were not already difficult enough, the COVID 19-pandemic has resulted in the mandatory imprisonment of personnel. Although working from home may seem desirable if it provides a haven, the lack of distinction between the two realms and the absence of commutes to transition between them may become a hardship (Adisa et al., 2021). How do our job and non-work experiences affect each other? How do our work and non-work identities interact when they play out in the context of our private lives? These are questions that need further in-depth investigation. Since many gig workers (i.e., those taking on relatively short-term employment (Efimov et al., 2020) are increasingly able to work virtually, their expertise in this field may give valuable insights (into delivery personnel, drivers and e-commerce). Consistent with the growth of the gig economy prior to COVID-19: at least 20% of the existing workforce in the industrialised economies are virtual workers (Nyberg et al., 2021), COVID-19 and the workplace, and this percentage is expected to rise to 40% by the middle of the 2020s (Shamsi et al., 2021). Hence, virtual work has become a critical part of the current work experience globally.

### **Employees Wellbeing**

During the current COVID-19 epidemic, many employees are forced to adopt a new way of working that is foreign to them (Mostafa, 2021). They are accustomed to their normal office routines, working closely with their colleagues, participating in meetings, and speaking directly with clients (Bocean et al., 2022). Professionals who are already accustomed to working from home may find that the modern working prevailing attitude (working from the home policy) has a negative impact on their mental health because it makes it harder to distinguish between work and personal lives when more and more schools are closing, and more children are at home with their parents (Pap et al., 2022). Workplace interventions impact workers' mental, physiological, and emotional development, which is why Mostafa (2021) defined employee well-being as work-life satisfaction. Senoga (2022) defined employee well-being as the degree to which a person realises his potential, copes with the usual pressures of life, performs at work effectively, and positively impacts her or his organisation and community. The psychological and physiological effects of working from home have been studied, with conflicting results (Efimov et al., 2020; Nyberg et al., 2021; Shamsi et al., 2021). Some findings showed that working from home had physiological benefits, including lower blood pressure compared to office employment (Mohammed, 2022).

However, one's inability to mentally check out from work may negate these advantages (Kirchner et al., 2020). The writers also noted that distinguishing between mental and actual absence from work is essential for regaining composure after a period of emotional disconnection. Keeping employees' minds off work when workers are constantly reachable is a greater challenge (Lopez-martins et al., 2019). Negative effects on health and happiness may be shown in the long term if people never get a break from their jobs, either physically or virtually (Adamovic et al., 2022). This is corroborated by the findings of two studies (Argawal, 2021; Singh et al., 2022) that demonstrated a correlation between poor evening psychological separation from work and poor sleep quality and subsequent morning weariness. However, Perrez et al. (2019) show that working from home heightens emotions of isolation and loneliness.

Nevertheless, as Galea et al. (2022) pointed out, remote employees are at a greater risk of experiencing feelings of isolation owing to a lack of social interchange; therefore, they need to interact with their coworkers whenever possible. When people are able to talk to one another and use modern means of connection, they are less likely to feel alone (Magson et al., 2022). Therefore, the social component and human connection lacking in virtual work is crucial to employees' mental health (Wood et al., 2021). Therefore, the major focus of this study is on the psychological health indicator.

### **Interactions Between Virtual Work and Employees' Wellbeing**

Having too much to accomplish and not enough time to complete it is a common experience since most individuals do not just have enough hours in the day (Perez et al., 2021; Adamovic, 2022). As a result of the technological advancements that have made it possible for businesses to run remotely in recent months, the lines between work and personal life have blurred (Swanzy, 2020). Work-life balance, family-to-work conflict, work-to-family conflict, work spillover, and work-to-family interference are all concepts that researchers have

explored (Salem et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2020; Roodbari et al., 2022); other studies have found that technology has helped facilitate the extension of family-related aspects into the workplace, leading to the development of connecting concepts like work-life interconnection or boundarylessness (Brunetto et al., 2020; Catwright and Roach, 2021). One definition of work-life integration is balancing the needs of one's career, one's family, and one's own psychological and emotional well-being within one's available time (Tordera et al., 2020). The difficulty of switching off from work at the end of the day is an example of how remote employees' lives bleed into the rest of their time (Prasad et al., 2020). Zhou et al. (2021), representing the first ideology, argued that in today's pandemic, work and residence are two exploding factors that often contribute to an irrational breakdown between the two spheres. The second school of thought suggested that incorporating personal and professional lives could facilitate a positive spillover in operational processes. The hours put in by remote workers have increased, and the intensity of their job has increased, according to several studies (Elsadek and Liu, 2021; Mostafa, 2021).

Consequently, many felt they had to be on call round the clock, stay late at the office, and even check emails on their days off (Bocean et al., 2022). A person's mental health might suffer from burnout or emotional exhaustion (Kirchner et al., 2020; Pap et al., 2022; Senoga, 2022). However, another school of thinking sees the advantages of this kind of adaptability for both employers and workers (Perez et al., 2018). Therefore, work-life integration is a step up from virtual work, where work and family are not treated as equal priorities; instead, employees integrate their professional knowledge into their intimate relationships (and vice versa) as a more systematic perspective to virtual work; this definition clarifies work-life integration as carrying out one's professional duties while maintaining one's personal life (Elsadek and Liu, 2021). Galea et al. (2022) concludes that, for individuals who virtual work, the quest for work-life integration has sparked discourse about the need to combine work and life to achieve the correct balance. Thus, the following conjectures are proposed

### **Stewardship Theory**

The concept of stewardship was first proposed by Davis et al. (1991). They said that the primary responsibility of a steward is to ensure the safety and growth of shareholders' money by improving the efficiency of government agencies. Consequently, managers of public entities are seen in this perspective as stewards acting on behalf of the state, and it is their responsibility to watch out for the public's best interests by ensuring the entities work as intended. According to this view, county government success is the only source of job fulfilment and incentive for county stewards (Adamovich et al., 2022). Accordingly, the foundation of this idea is the understanding that it is crucial to establish systems that provide extensive steward authority while providing as much trust-based autonomy as possible. It stresses the need for workers and leaders to constantly make their own decisions to maintain public confidence and productivity. Stewardship theory borrows heavily from psychology and focuses on how leaders should act (Magson et al., 2022).

The public benefits from the steward's actions since they are in the best interest of the organisation entrusted to them, and the steward will not stray from the interests of the public's needs as long as he works toward the institution's objectives. Since the institution's success will meet most requirements and the work of the stewards will be transparent, the steward's utility increases in places where public wealth is increased. Stewards regulate the amount of force exerted by the public on the different beneficiaries. Consequently, the idea is an argument put out in the performance of public institutions that satisfies the needs for the engaged government resources leading to dynamic performance, resulting in superior administration (Davis et al., 2018; Keay, 2017)).

The stewardship theory is an alternative normative framework to the agency theory that is used in corporate governance. In its simplest form, the stewardship idea postulates that when managers are given discretion over their actions, they will make good decisions for the organisations they oversee. Unlike agency theorists, good stewards collaborate rather than compete and are not driven by self-interest. According to stewardship theory, an individual's own personal, career, and other interests may be served by working for the larger benefit of the organisation. Extrinsic incentives like as trust, reputational growth, reciprocity, flexibility and independence, responsibilities, employee satisfaction, consistency and retention, and purpose alignment all play a role in keeping stewards engaged. The initial disposition of trust by both the principle and steward is crucial to stewardship theory. Stewardship behaviour is correlated with levels of encouragement. Using relational leadership practices, the stewardship notion strengthens the bond between leader and follower. The



inventiveness, connected to stewardship behaviour, and motivational assistance may also be favourably influenced by the situation in which it is provided.

## METHODOLOGY

A survey research design was employed in this paper which includes the service sector in Nigeria as the theatre of the study. According to Adetokunbo and Edioye (2020), the Nigerian service sector has the highest contribution to the country's gross domestic product. Employees of organisations in the Nigerian service sector made up the population of this study. These organisations were purposively grouped into financial services, information technology, health, education and retail/wholesale trade; where 100 employees were randomly selected from each group. A structured questionnaire was developed based on the research questions to capture responses to the items on the study variables. The questionnaire consists of two main parts. Part A has items on the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Part B consists of question items on the study variables, namely; virtual work, emotional exhaustion, psychological wellbeing and work-life balance. Responses were captured on the five-point Likert scale, ranging from 'Strongly Agreed' - 5 to 'Strongly Disagreed' - 1. The question items for the core variables were adapted from Dissanayaka and Ali (2013) and Vishwa et al. (2015). The items were subjected to a pretest using samples outside the study area and a Cronbach Alpha statistics of 0.76 establishes reliability of the research instrument.

To achieve the objectives of the study, simple linear regression models were used to specify the relationship between virtual work and each of the indicators of employee's wellbeing (emotional exhaustion, psychological wellbeing & work-life balance). The models are stated thus;

$$EE = \beta_0 + \beta_1 VW + e \quad (\text{Model-1})$$

$$PW = \beta_0 + \beta_1 VW + e \quad (\text{Model-2})$$

$$WB = \beta_0 + \beta_1 VW + e \quad (\text{Model-3})$$

Where:

EE -Emotional Exhaustion

PW -Psychological Wellbeing

WB -Work-life Balance

VW – Virtual Work

$\beta_0$  – Intercept/Constant

$\beta_1$  – Regression coefficient

e – error term

The parameters in the models were estimated through the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) technique. In the Apriori, it is expected that virtual work will influence all the dimensions of employee's wellbeing. The descriptive analysis involves statistical tools such as the frequency distribution, percentages, mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis. The inferential analysis includes the ANOVA test, serial correlation test and estimates of the parameters in the models.

## RESULT

Five hundred copies of the questionnaire were administered through an online survey between 20<sup>th</sup> May and 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2022. A total number of four hundred and eighty six (486) copies were properly filled and used for this study. This represents ninety-seven percent (97%) response rate. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) recommends

response rate above the 50% threshold or above a sample size of 300. The distribution of the respondents across the categories in the service sector of Nigeria is presented in Figure 1.

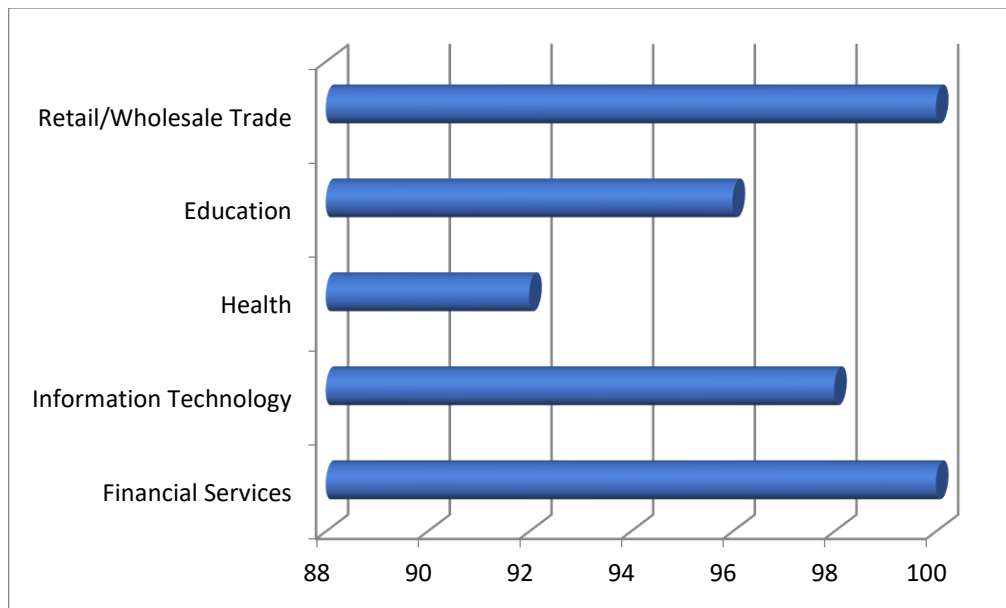


Fig 1: Responses across Categories in the Service Industry

### Descriptive Analysis

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

Variables	Data	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	221	45.5
	Female	265	54.5
		486	100.0
Age bracket	Below 20years	57	11.7
	21 – 30years	124	25.5
	31 – 40years	182	37.4
	41 – 50years	79	16.3
	51years and above	44	9.1
		486	100.0
Academic Qualification	Diploma/Certificate	135	27.8
	BSc/BA/BEng/HND	280	57.6
	Higher Degrees	71	14.6
		486	100.0
Work Experience	Below 5years	95	19.5

	6 - 10 years	121	24.9
	11 - 15 years	106	21.8
	16 - 20 years	86	17.7
	Above 20years	78	16.0
		486	100.0

Source: SPSS 26 (2022)

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The gender distribution indicates that majority are female (54.5%). The age distribution shows a mean age bracket of 31-40 years (37.4%) with majority having a first degree or its equivalent (57.6%). Furthermore, results suggest an even spread of the years of working experience in the service industry.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Responses to the Core Variables

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Virtual Work	486	4.02	0.99	-0.816	0.33
Emotional Exhaustion	486	4.3	0.88	-0.81	-0.494
Psychological Wellbeing	486	4.25	0.87	-0.757	-0.447
Work-Life Balance	486	4.17	0.72	-0.855	-0.691
Valid N (listwise)	486				

Source: SPSS 26 (2022)

Table 2 reveals the summary of the statistics for the responses to the items in the research questionnaire. The result shows an average response of 4.02, implying that majority of the respondents agree with the statements on 'Virtual Work'. However, a standard deviation of 99% suggests that this assumption varies across the respondents. Similarly, the mean responses of 4.30, 4.25 and 4.17 all indicate that majority of the respondents agree with the items on the dependent variables (emotional exhaustion, psychological wellbeing and work-life balance) as being components of employee's wellbeing in their organisations. However, the variations of 88%, 87% and 72% respectively, indicate a disparity of opinion across the respondents. Furthermore, the skewness and kurtosis statistics indicate normality of the spread of the responses across the study variables.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.576	0.332	0.330	0.819	2.12
2	0.689	0.475	0.472	0.811	1.98
3	0.594	0.353	0.351	0.773	2.03

Source: SPSS 26 (2022)

The summary of the three linear models in the study is presented in Table 3. The results show a fairly strong

relationship between virtual work and emotional exhaustion (R-coefficient=0.576). Furthermore, the R-squared value indicates that the virtual work variable explains 33.2% of the total variations in emotional exhaustion, amongst the respondents. In addition, the Durbin-Watson statistics is approximately 2, indicating the absence of serial correlation between the variables.

Similarly, the R-coefficient of 0.689 implies a strong relationship between virtual work and psychological wellbeing. The R-squared value also indicates that the virtual work variable explains 47.5% of the total variations in the psychological wellbeing of the respondents. The Durbin-Watson statistics (1.98) further suggests the absence of serial correlation between the variables.

Lastly, the R coefficient of 0.594 indicates a fairly strong relationship between virtual work and work-life balance. The R-squared value further affirms that the virtual work variable accounts for 35.3% of the variation in the work-life balance of the respondents. The Durbin-Watson statistics (2.03) also suggests the absence of serial correlation between the variables.

Table 4: ANOVA Result

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	13.242	1	13.242	63.952	0.001
	Residual	100.425	485	0.207		
	Total	113.667	486			
2	Regression	19.239	1	19.239	66.015	0.000
	Residual	141.345	485	0.291		
	Total	160.584	486			
3	Regression	14.241	1	14.241	59.943	0.000
	Residual	115.225	485	0.238		
	Total	129.466	486			

Source: SPSS 26 (2022)

Table 4 shows the ANOVA of the model effect of the variables in the three linear models. The results indicate that all the F-statistics (F = 63.95, 66.02 & 59.94 respectively) of the models are significant at the 5% level (p-values < 0.05).

### Parameters Estimates of Model

Table 5: Impact of Virtual Work on Employee's Emotional Exhaustion

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t-statistic	p-value
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.352	0.161		14.609	0.000
	Virtual Work	-0.446	0.052	0.470	-8.577	0.001

Source: SPSS 26 (2022)

The regression coefficient in Table 5 ( $\beta_1 = -0.45$ ) is negative, indicating an inverse relationship between virtual



work and emotional exhaustion. The t-statistics of this co-efficient ( $t = -8.58$ ) is statistically significant at the 5% level ( $p = 0.01 < 0.05$ ) suggesting that virtual work significantly influences emotional exhaustion.

Table 6: Impact of Virtual Work on Employee's Psychological Wellbeing

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t-statistic	p-value
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
2	(Constant)	3.338	0.171		19.520	0.000
	Virtual Work	0.536	0.072	0.694	7.444	0.000

Source: SPSS 26 (2022)

The regression coefficient in Table 6 ( $\beta_1 = -0.54$ ) is positive and implies a direct relationship between virtual work and psychological wellbeing. The t-statistics of this co-efficient ( $t = 7.44$ ) is significant at the 5% level ( $p = 0.00 < 0.05$ ), which suggests that virtual work significantly influences psychological wellbeing.

Table 7: Impact of Virtual Work on Employee's Work-Life Balance

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t-statistic	p-value
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
3	(Constant)	2.904	0.172		16.884	0.000
	Virtual Work	0.436	0.082	0.057	5.317	0.000

Source: SPSS 26 (2022)

Table 7 reveals a positive regression coefficient ( $\beta_1 = -0.44$ ) which implies a direct relationship between virtual work and work-life balance. In addition, the t-statistics of this co-efficient ( $t = 5.32$ ) is significant at the 5% level ( $p = 0.00 < 0.05$ ), suggesting that virtual work significantly influences work-life balance

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION OF FINDINGS

The general objective of this study was to investigate the impact of virtual work on the wellbeing of employees in the Nigerian service industry. The findings have established that virtual work significantly influences employee's wellbeing. Specifically, the results have shown that virtual work inversely and significantly drives employee's emotional exhaustion in the subsector. The implication of this is that when workers are allowed to do their work virtually, there is a reduction in their tendency to have emotional exhaustion. This finding is consistent with those of Palm et al. (2020), Sonnentag (2018), Prasad et al., (2020), Mann and Holdsworth (2003). However, the finding disagrees with the position of Greer and Payne (2014).

Furthermore, the findings from this study has established virtual work as major driver of psychological wellbeing. This implies that working virtually enhances the psychological health of employees in the service industry. Security concerns on roads and time spent in traffic are among the factors contributing to worker's psychological trauma in Nigeria. These factors are almost eliminated when working from home. The findings here support the position of Sonnentag et al., (2008) and Braukmann et al., (2018).

In addition, the analysis in this study has revealed virtual work as a significant driver of work-life balance among employees in the Nigerian service industry. This suggests that employees are able to create and maintain a balance in their work-life when they are allowed to work virtually, thereby improving their overall wellbeing. This finding agrees with the that of Heraty et al. (2008) but disagrees with that of Prasad et al. (2020).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the impact of virtual work on workers' mental health, emotional tiredness, and ability to balance their personal and professional lives in Nigeria, especially in this post COVID-19 era. The theme was derived through an examination of literature studies and a survey of researches on virtual work, in order to create a conceptual framework considering wellness and work-life balance. Findings revealed significant relationship between virtual work and employee's wellbeing in the Nigerian service industry. The study concludes that working remotely is a major driver of worker's mental, emotional and overall wellbeing. Work intensity, extended operational hours, a perception of high unemployment, difficulty in staying motivated, and communication difficulties are some of the limitations associated with virtual work, according to this research. However, these benefits do outweigh the drawbacks, which include the adaptability offered while working away from home, which can aid in accomplishing the appropriate integration between personal and professional to achieve the desired balance between both areas, and effective security for mental wellbeing. The accessibility of technologies and more communication and collaboration options that might reduce the impact of loneliness and alienated from others has been shown to improve employees' mental health when working from home.

To accurately quantify what is important to any firm during the pandemic and to highlight distinct areas where workers need help, it is advised that companies utilize data analytics to build an effective wellness plan. Information gathered through pulse surveys, conducted once a week to gauge staff morale and get insight into the state of various teams, departments, and the company as a whole might be used for this purpose. This helps ensure that workers always feel supported, communicates to them that their opinions are valued, and demonstrates an intention to implement tactics and work-life initiatives to enhance their quality of life throughout this transition and teach them how to meditate mindfully for enhanced concentration and emotional stability. In addition to presenting a video message from upper-level management or leaders who express compassion and speak candidly to employees about their difficulties, both live and recorded versions of such videos are recommended.

Companies must provide their employees with the newest hardware and software that facilitates a productive remote work lifestyle, training in its use and any necessary technical assistance. Whether it is more internet bandwidth, a unique arrangement with internet providers, or anything else, the firm should give its staff portable computers that can access the corporate intranet. It is crucial to encourage open lines of communication and draw attention to all the resources staff has at their disposal.

## REFERENCES

1. Adamovic, M. (2022). How does employee cultural background influence the effects of telework on job stress? The roles of power distance, individualism, and beliefs about telework. *International Journal of Information Management*, 62, 102437.
2. Adamovic, M., Gahan, P., Olsen, J., Gulyas, A., Shallcross, D. and Mendoza, A., (2022). Exploring the adoption of virtual work: the role of virtual work self-efficacy and virtual work climate. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 33(17), pp.3492-3525.
3. Adisa, T.A., Ogbonnaya, C. and Adekoya, O.D., (2021). Remote working and employee engagement: a qualitative study of British workers during the pandemic. *Information Technology & People*.
4. Agarwal, P. (2021). Shattered but smiling: Human resource management and the wellbeing of hotel employees during COVID-19. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 93, 102765.
5. Alexander, A., De Smet, A., Langstaff, M., & Ravid, D. (2021). What employees are saying about the future of remote work. McKinsey & Company.
6. Bartsch, S., Weber, E., Büttgen, M. and Huber, A., 2020. Leadership matters in crisis-induced digital transformation: how to lead service employees effectively during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Service Management*.
7. Bocean, C. G., Nicolescu, M. M., Cazacu, M., & Dumitriu, S. (2022). The Role of Social Responsibility and Ethics in Employees' Wellbeing. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(14), 8838.
8. Brachten, F., Brünker, F., Frick, N. R., Ross, B., & Stieglitz, S. (2020). On the ability of virtual agents

- to decrease cognitive load: an experimental study. *Information Systems and e-Business Management*, 18(2), 187-207.
9. Brachten, F., Brünker, F., Frick, N. R., Ross, B., & Stieglitz, S. (2020). On the ability of virtual agents to decrease cognitive load: an experimental study. *Information Systems and e-Business Management*, 18(2), 187-207.
  10. Brunetto, Y., Dick, T., Xerri, M., & Cully, A. (2020). Building capacity in the healthcare sector: a strengths-based approach for increasing employees' well-being and organisational resilience. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 26(3), 309-323.
  11. Cartwright, A., & Roach, J. (2021). The wellbeing of UK police: a study of recorded absences from work of UK police employees due to psychological illness and stress using freedom of information act data. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, 15(2), 1326-1338.
  12. Celma, D., Martinez-Garcia, E., & Raya, J. M. (2018). Socially responsible HR practices and their effects on employees' wellbeing: Empirical evidence from Catalonia, Spain. *European Research on Management and Business Economics*, 24(2), 82-89.
  13. Davis, J. H., Schoorman, F. D., & Donaldson, L. (2018). Toward a stewardship theory of management. In *Business ethics and strategy* (pp. 473-500). Routledge.
  14. Day, A., Barber, L., & Tonet, J. (2019). Information communication technology and employee well-being: Understanding the “iParadox Triad” at work. *The Cambridge handbook of technology and employee behavior*, 580-607.
  15. Efimov, I., Harth, V. and Mache, S., 2020. Health-oriented self-and employee leadership in virtual teams: A qualitative study with virtual leaders. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(18), p.6519.
  16. Elsadek, M., & Liu, B. (2021). Effects of viewing flowering plants on employees' wellbeing in an office-like environment. *Indoor and Built Environment*, 30(9), 1429-1440.
  17. Gabr, H. M., Soliman, S. S., Allam, H. K., & Raouf, S. Y. A. (2021). Effects of remote virtual work environment during COVID-19 pandemic on technostress among Menoufia University Staff, Egypt: A cross-sectional study. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*, 28(38), 53746-53753.
  18. Galea, N., Powell, A., Salignac, F., Chappell, L. and Loosemore, M., 2022. When following the rules is bad for wellbeing: The effects of gendered rules in the Australian construction industry. *Work, Employment and Society*, 36(1), pp.119-138.
  19. Gigauri, I., 2020. Effects of Covid-19 on Human Resource Management from the Perspective of Digitalization and Work-life-balance. *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Economy*, (4 (31)).
  20. Graves, L.M. and Karabayeva, A., 2020. Managing virtual workers—strategies for success. *IEEE Engineering Management Review*, 48(2), pp.166-172.
  21. Green, N., Tappin, D., & Bentley, T. (2020). Working from home before, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic: implications for workers and organisations. *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations*, 45(2), 5-16.
  22. Karl, K. A., Peluchette, J. V., & Aghakhani, N. (2022). Virtual work meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic: The good, bad, and ugly. *Small Group Research*, 53(3), 343-365.
  23. Keay, A. (2017). Stewardship theory: is board accountability necessary?. *International Journal of Law and Management*.
  24. Kirchner, K., Seim, R., & Ipsen, C. (2020). The influence of enterprise social media on employees' wellbeing: A research agenda. *14th European Academy of Occupational Health Psychology*.
  25. Kauffeld, S., Tartler, D., Gräfe, H., Windmann, A.K. and Sauer, N.C., 2022. What will mobile and virtual work look like in the future? Results of a Delphi-based study. *Gruppe. Interaktion. Organisation. Zeitschrift für Angewandte Organisationspsychologie (GIO)*, pp.1-26.
  26. Lopez-Martin, E., & Topa, G. (2019). Organizational culture and job demands and resources: Their impact on employees' wellbeing in a multivariate multilevel model. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 16(17), 3006.
  27. Mihalache, M., & Mihalache, O. R. (2022). How workplace support for the COVID-19 pandemic and personality traits affect changes in employees' affective commitment to the organization and job-related well-being. *Human resource management*, 61(3), 295-314.
  28. Miron, D., Petcu, M. A., David-Sobolevski, M. I., & Cojocariu, R. C. (2021). A multidimensional

- approach of the relationship between teleworking and employees well-being-romania during the pandemic generated by the SARS-COV-2 virus. *Amfiteatru Economic*, 23(58), 586-600.
29. Mostafa, B.A., 2021. The effect of remote working on employees wellbeing and work-life integration during pandemic in Egypt.
  30. Muzee, H., Kizza, J. and Mugabe, G.M., 2021. Organizational compassion and employee engagement in virtual work environments during covid-19 lockdown in Uganda and Rwanda. *International Journal of Management, Knowledge and Learning*, 10.
  31. Nyberg, A.J., Shaw, J.D. and Zhu, J., 2021. The people still make the (remote work-) place: Lessons from a pandemic. *Journal of management*, 47(8), pp.1967-1976.
  32. Osman M., L. (2022). Covid19 impact on employees' wellbeing.
  33. Patil, R., & Gopalakrishnan, G. (2020). A study on employee experience with respect to remote working during the Covid 19-pandemic. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 7(11), 3910-3918.
  34. Pap, J., Mako, C., Illessy, M., Dedaj, Z., Ardabili, S., Torok, B., & Mosavi, A. (2022). Correlation Analysis of Factors Affecting Firm Performance and Employees Wellbeing: Application of Advanced Machine Learning Analysis. *Algorithms*, 15(9), 300.
  35. Pérez, S., Fernández-Salineró, S., & Topa, G. (2018). Sustainability in organizations: perceptions of corporate social responsibility and Spanish employees' attitudes and behaviors. *Sustainability*, 10(10), 3423.
  36. Prasad, D. K., Mangipudi, D. M. R., Vaidya, D. R., & Muralidhar, B. (2020). Organizational climate, opportunities, challenges and psychological wellbeing of the remote working employees during COVID-19 pandemic: a general linear model approach with reference to information technology industry in hyderabad. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Engineering and Technology (IJARET)*, 11(4).
  37. Pretsch, J., 2021. Improving employee well-being by means of virtual reality–REALEX: an empirical case study.
  38. Richter, A. (2020). Locked-down digital work. *International Journal of Information Management*, 55, 102157.
  39. Roodbari, H., Axtell, C., Nielsen, K., & Sorensen, G. (2022). Organisational interventions to improve employees' health and wellbeing: A realist synthesis. *Applied Psychology*, 71(3), 1058-1081.
  40. Salem, N. H., Ishaq, M. I., Yaqoob, S., Raza, A., & Zia, H. (2022). Employee engagement, innovative work behaviour, and employee wellbeing: Do workplace spirituality and individual spirituality matter?. *Business Ethics, the Environment & Responsibility*.
  41. Sennoga, S. (2022). Leadership styles, occupational stress and employees' wellbeing: a case study of Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (Doctoral dissertation, Makerere University).
  42. Shaik, F. F., Makhecha, U. P., & Gouda, S. K. (2020). Work and non-work identities in global virtual teams: Role of cultural intelligence in employee engagement. *International Journal of Manpower*, 42(1), 51-78.
  43. Singh, P., Bala, H., Dey, B. L., & Filieri, R. (2022). Enforced remote working: The impact of digital platform-induced stress and remote working experience on technology exhaustion and subjective wellbeing. *Journal of Business Research*, 151, 269-286.
  44. Stich, J.F., 2020. A review of workplace stress in the virtual office. *Intelligent Buildings International*, 12(3), pp.208-220.
  45. Swanzy, E. K. (2020). The Impact of Supervisor Support on Employees' Psychological Wellbeing: A Parallel Mediation Analysis of Work-To-Family Conflict and Job Satisfaction. *International Business Research*, 13(11), 41-53.
  46. Toth, I., Heinänen, S. and Blomqvist, K., 2020. Freelancing on digital work platforms–roles of virtual community trust and work engagement on person–job fit. *VINE Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems*.
  47. Unsworth, K. (2020). Human relations virtual special issue: Virtual working. *Human Relations*, 73(7), 1036-1040.
  48. Wang, B., Liu, Y., Qian, J. and Parker, S.K., 2021. Achieving effective remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic: A work design perspective. *Applied psychology*, 70(1), pp.16-59.
  49. Weigelt, O., Marcus, B., Felfe, J., Kluge, A., & Ontrup, G. (2021). Working under pandemic conditions. *Zeitschrift für Arbeits-und Organisationspsychologie A&O*.

- 
50. Wilson, J., 2021. Impact of work from home policies on workplace productivity and employee sentiments during the COVID-19 pandemic.
  51. Wood, B. P., Eid, R., & Agag, G. (2021). A multilevel investigation of the link between ethical leadership behaviour and employees green behaviour in the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 97, 102993.
  52. Yadav, S., Dubey, A., Chawla, P. and Jha, S., 2020. Employee engagement strategy for employees working in virtual environment in the IT industry.
  53. Yarberr, S. and Sims, C., 2021. The impact of COVID-19-prompted virtual/remote work environments on employees' career development: Social learning theory, belongingness, and self-empowerment. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 23(3), pp.237-252.
  54. Zhou, X., Rasool, S. F., & Ma, D. (2020, September). The relationship between workplace violence and innovative work behavior: the mediating roles of employee wellbeing. In *Healthcare* (Vol. 8, No. 3, p. 332). MDPI.