

Comparative Analysis of Career Interest, Work-Life Balance, Professional Development and Job Performance among Technical Education Lecturers in Universities in Southwest, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the comparative analysis of career interest, work-life balance, professional development, and job performance among technical education lecturers in universities in Southwest Nigeria. Four objectives and four research questions guided the study. A correlational research design was adopted, and the entire population of 64 technical education lecturers participated in the study. Data were collected using two structured questionnaires: the Career Interest and Work-life Balance Questionnaire (CAWQ) and the Lecturers Professional Development and Job Performance Questionnaire (LPJQ). The instruments, which measured career interest, work-life balance, professional development, and job performance, were validated by experts and yielded test-retest reliability coefficients of 0.83 and 0.87 for CAWQ and LPJQ, respectively. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. The findings revealed a moderate positive significant relationship between career interest and professional development ($r = .575, p < .05$), as well as between career interest and job performance ($r = .557, p < .05$). Conversely, work-life balance had a weak but significant positive relationship with professional development ($r = .392, p < .05$) and job performance ($r = .295, p < .05$). These results indicate that career interest exerts a stronger influence on lecturers' professional development and job performance than work-life balance. The study concluded that lecturers with higher career interest are more likely to engage in professional development activities and perform better in their roles. It was recommended that universities prioritize career interest during lecturer recruitment, reduce excessive workloads to support development opportunities, and expand funding access for professional growth initiatives.

Keyword: Career interest, Work-life balance, Professional development, Job performance, Technical education lecturers

Introduction

Education is universally recognized as an instrument for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for individual and societal development. It plays a crucial role in shaping the socio-economic and cultural advancement of nations. Developed countries have prioritized education as a foundation for technological advancement, productivity, and global competitiveness (Glowacki et al., 2016). To achieve similar progress, nations like Nigeria have adopted vocational and technical education (VTE) programmes, which are designed to equip learners with practical skills, problem-solving abilities, and entrepreneurial competencies required for self-reliance and economic survival. Within VTE, technical education occupies a strategic position because it prepares individuals for careers in fields such as automobile technology, electrical/electronic technology, building construction, metalwork, and woodworking. These programmes emphasize hands-on training, innovation, and critical thinking, ensuring graduates are not only employable but also capable of contributing to industrial and national development (Odo et al., 2017). However, the quality of technical education largely depends on the competence, dedication, and professional development of lecturers who serve as facilitators of knowledge and skill acquisition. Lecturers, particularly in technical disciplines, are central to the transmission of knowledge and skills. They are responsible for teaching theoretical and practical aspects of their specialization. They also mentor students, conduct research, and are required to stay updated with evolving industry standards in order to remain relevant (Kaur et al., 2019; Jaafar, 2023). Their job performance, which reflects their ability to design instruction, manage learning environments, motivate students, and provide constructive feedback, directly influences student achievement (Benítez et al., 2017). A decline in lecturers' effectiveness often results in poor student outcomes, reduced employability, and weakened national productivity. Therefore, sustained professional development is necessary for lecturers to improve competence, adopt innovative teaching methods, and adapt to global labour market trends (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017;

Comparative Analysis of Career Interest, Work-life... Shodeinde, A. & Olatunji, O. A. (2025)

Bromley, 2019). However, lecturers' ability to engage meaningfully in professional development and sustain high job performance is influenced by multiple factors which includes career interest and work-life balance.

Career interest refers to an individual's intrinsic passion, motivation, and preference for a chosen field or occupation (Sung et al., 2017). When lecturers' career choices align with their personal interests and abilities, they tend to demonstrate higher commitment, engagement, and job satisfaction. Conversely, when career interest is weak, lecturers may exhibit low motivation, minimal involvement in professional development, and poor teaching performance (Kelchtermans, 2017; Liu et al., 2021). In Nigeria, the problem of lecturer attrition has been linked to the lack of genuine interest in teaching, leading to ineffective classroom delivery and disengagement (Umar & Abdullahi, 2023). Thus, career interest has a role to play in determining lecturers' professional growth and effectiveness. While career interest can influence the level of commitment and motivation lecturers bring into their work, work-life balance can further shape how effectively they can sustain this interest and turn it into regular capacity building and good work performance. Work-life balance represents the stability between professional responsibilities and personal life demands (Kossek et al., 2014). For lecturers, this balance is important because they often face high workloads, administrative duties, and research expectations alongside family and social obligations. When work-life balance is achieved, lecturers are more likely to be motivated, mentally healthy, and productive, which enhances their capacity to engage in professional development and deliver quality teaching (Haar et al., 2014). Conversely, poor work-life balance due to stress, inadequate institutional support, or excessive workloads can result in burnout, dissatisfaction, and diminished job performance. In Nigeria's university system, where resources are strained and lecturers often face large class sizes and limited institutional support, maintaining work-life balance remains a pressing challenge. Lecturer's work-life balance can also determine the extent to which they actively participate in professional development activities.

Professional development refers to continuous learning and growth activities that enhance lecturers' knowledge, teaching skills, and pedagogical practices (Abdulrab, 2023). It encompasses workshops, seminars, research, collaborations, and experiential learning designed to improve competence. For technical education lecturers, professional development is vital in keeping pace with innovations in technology and industrial practice. Without consistent development, lecturers may be delivering outdated content, which may compromise students' preparedness for the labour market. The quality of lecturers' professional development can also reflect in their job performance. This is because continuous learning will enhance their ability to teach effectively, conduct research, and contribute meaningfully to institutional goals. Job performance in the educational context is the degree to which lecturers effectively execute their teaching, research, and service responsibilities in line with institutional goals (Wijayanto & Riani, 2021). High job performance is related to student achievement, graduate employability, and institutional reputation. A decline in performance may limit student skills acquisition and worsen graduate unemployment in Nigeria. In Nigeria, despite the expansion of technical education, the country continues to grapple with graduate unemployment, skills mismatch, and widespread poverty (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Many graduates lack the competencies demanded by industries, partly due to ineffective teaching and inadequate training. This raises questions about the factors influencing lecturers' effectiveness and professional development. Evidence suggests that weak career interest and poor work-life balance may hinder lecturers' capacity to engage in lifelong learning and deliver quality instruction (OECD, 2018; O'Riordan, 2021).

Furthermore, lecturers in Nigerian universities often face systemic challenges such as poor remuneration, heavy teaching loads, which contribute to job dissatisfaction. These issues necessitate the need to examine how factors like career interest and work-life balance shape lecturers' professional development and job performance. Therefore, this study filled this gap by investigating how career interest and work-life balance influence the professional development and job performance of technical education lecturers in universities in Southwest Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to investigate technical education lecturers' career interest and work-life balance in relation to their professional development and job performance in universities in southwest Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated the:



Comparative Analysis of Career Interest, Work-life... Shodeinde, A. & Olatunji, O. A. (2025)

1. relationship between career interest and professional development of technical education lecturers in universities in southwest Nigeria.
2. relationship between work-life balance and professional development of technical education lecturers in universities in southwest Nigeria.
3. relationship between career interest and job performance of woodwork lecturers in universities in southwest Nigeria.
4. relationship between work-life balance and job performance of woodwork lecturers in universities in southwest Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between career interest and the professional development of technical education lecturers in universities in Southwest Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between work-life balance and the professional development of technical education lecturers in universities in Southwest Nigeria?
3. What is the relationship between career interest and the job performance of technical education lecturers in universities in Southwest Nigeria?
4. What is the relationship between work-life balance and the job performance of technical education lecturers in universities in Southwest Nigeria?

Methodology

A correlational research design was adopted to examine the relationships among career interest, work-life balance, professional development, and job performance of technical education lecturers in universities in Southwest Nigeria. The population for this study comprised of all the sixty-four (64) technical education lecturers from universities in Southwest Nigeria. All the 64 lecturers participated in the study since the population size was small and manageable. The instrument used for data collection consisted of two questionnaires titled “Career Interest and Work-life Balance Questionnaire (CAWQ), and Lecturers Professional Development and Job Performance Questionnaire (LPJQ). The questionnaire comprised three sections. The first section (Section A) of the questionnaire solicited for the demographic information of each participant in the study. The second section (section B) was divided into four (2) sections which comprises 23 items with statements that measured the career interest and work-life balance. Career interest was measured with a questionnaire that consists of fifteen (15) items. The items on the questionnaire were rated on five-point scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Work life balance was measured with Work life balance Scale adopted from Mathews et al. (2021). The Work life balance Scale consisted of eight (8) items that measured the level at which the lecturers’ rate how the work is balanced with their lives. The work life balance scale was rated on a five-point scale, from 1 (Very satisfied) to 5 (Very Dissatisfied). Third section (section C) consisted of thirty-three (33) items that measured professional development and job performance. Professional development scale, adapted from Van-Offenbeek (2001), consisted of nine (9) items, it was subdivided into two portion which are information acquisition and feedback asking behavior. Information acquisition consisted of five (5) items, while feedback asking behavior consisted of four (4) items. The participants indicated their responses regarding their participation in professional development activities on a 5-point likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). Job Performance of lecturers was measured using adapted job performance response scale developed by Edith (2019). The scale comprised of twenty-four (24) items, and was used to measure the three aspects of job performance among lecturers such as, teaching with twelve (12) items, research with five (5) items and community service with seven (7) items. The scale was rated on a five-point likert scale ranging from (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) (Somewhat Agree, (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree. Higher scores indicated high level of job-performance among technical education lecturers while lower scores either indicate moderate or low-level job-performance. The instrument was face-validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was established through the test-retest method. The analysis of the two administrations yielded reliability coefficients of 0.83 and 0.87 for CAWQ and LPJQ, respectively. Data were collected with the help of two research assistants. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used for data analysis. Correlation strength was interpreted based on the following scale: 0.01–0.20 = Very weak, 0.21–0.40 = Weak, 0.41–0.60 = Moderate, 0.61–0.80 = Strong, 0.81–0.99 = Very strong, and 0 or 1 = No correlation or perfect correlation.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1

What is the relationship between career interest and the professional development of technical education lecturers in universities in Southwest Nigeria?

Table 1: Relationship between career interest and the professional development of technical education lecturers

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Career interest	3.86	0.63	1	
2. Professional development	3.74	0.70	.575*	1

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result in Table 1 shows a correlation coefficient of 0.575 between career interest (Mean = 3.86, SD = 0.63) and professional development (Mean = 3.74, SD = 0.70) of technical education lecturers in universities in Southwest Nigeria. This relationship is moderate and positive, and this indicates that lecturers with higher levels of career interest are more likely to engage in professional development activities. The significance of the correlation ($p < 0.05$) further suggests that the relationship is not due to chance.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between work-life balance and the professional development of technical education lecturers in universities in Southwest Nigeria?

Table 2: Relationship between work-life balance and the professional development of technical education lecturers

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Work-life balance	3.67	0.91	1	
2. Professional development	3.74	0.70	.392*	1

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 reveals a correlation between work-life balance (Mean = 3.67, SD = 0.91) and professional development (Mean = 3.74, SD = 0.70) is 0.392, which is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Following the correlation scale, this represents a weak positive relationship, which suggests that lecturers with a better work-life balance tend to participate more in professional development, though the strength of the association is not strong. This means that work-life balance plays a limited role in influencing professional development.

Research Question 3

What is the relationship between career interest and the job performance of technical education lecturers in universities in Southwest Nigeria?

Table 3: Relationship between career interest and the job performance of technical education lecturers

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Career interest	3.86	0.63	1	
2. Job performance	4.02	0.62	.557*	1

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result in Table 3 indicates a correlation coefficient of .557 between career interest (Mean = 3.86, SD = 0.63) and job performance (Mean = 4.02, SD = 0.62) of technical education lecturers. This shows a moderate positive relationship, indicating that lecturers with higher career interest tend to exhibit better job performance. The relationship between the two variables is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Research Question 4

What is the relationship between work-life balance and the job performance of technical education lecturers in universities in Southwest Nigeria?

Table 4: Relationship between work-life balance and the job performance of technical education lecturers

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Work-life balance	3.67	0.91	1	
2. Job performance	4.02	0.62	.295*	1

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



Comparative Analysis of Career Interest, Work-life... Shodeinde, A. & Olatunji, O. A. (2025)

Table 4 shows a correlation coefficient of .295 between work-life balance (Mean = 3.67, SD = 0.91) and job performance (Mean = 4.02, SD = 0.62). This indicates a weak positive relationship, meaning that lecturers with better work-life balance may perform better in their jobs, even though the strength of this association is not strong. Although the relationship between the two variables is weak, it is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Findings of the Study

1. There is a moderate positive significant relationship between career interest and professional development of technical education lecturers. This means lecturers who show more interest in their careers are more likely to take part in professional development.
2. There is a weak positive significant relationship between work-life balance and professional development of technical education lecturers. This means that lecturers with better work-life balance are a little more likely to engage in professional development.
3. There is a moderate positive significant relationship between career interest and job performance of technical education lecturers. This means lecturers with greater career interest tend to perform better in their jobs.
4. There is a weak positive relationship between work-life balance and job performance of technical education lecturers. This indicates that lecturers with better work-life balance may perform better, although the association is not strong.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed a moderate positive and significant relationship between career interest and the professional development of technical education lecturers in universities in Southwest Nigeria. This finding implies that lecturers with higher career interest are more likely to pursue professional development activities. This aligns with Sung et al. (2017) who noted that individuals with strong career interests are more committed to learning and skills development, as such interest motivates them to continually update their knowledge. Similarly, Liu et al. (2021) found that when educators' career paths match their interests and intrinsic motivations, they are more likely to engage in training, workshops, and lifelong learning activities. Also, Kelchtermans (2017) observed that lecturers who lack genuine career interest often avoid professional development activities. Furthermore, the moderate correlation suggests that career interest may not alone guarantee sustained professional development and top job performance, possibly due to external or systemic constraints (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The study also found a weak positive but significant relationship between work-life balance and professional development. This suggests that while lecturers who maintain a good balance between professional responsibilities and personal life are likely to be more inclined to engage in professional development, the influence is not strong. This finding is in line with Haar et al. (2014), who noted that a balanced work and personal life promotes mental health and productivity, which may encourage participation in developmental activities. However, the weak strength of correlation found in this study implies that, although important, work-life balance might be less influential than career interest in lecturers' professional engagement and effectiveness. In support of this, O'Riordan (2021) noted that in higher education contexts with limited resources and heavy workloads such as Nigeria, even lecturers with a stable personal life may still struggle to pursue consistent professional development due to systemic constraints.

The study further established a moderate positive significant relationship between career interest and job performance. This means that lecturers who demonstrate strong career interest are more likely to perform effectively in their teaching, research, and community service roles. This finding corroborates Benítez et al. (2017), who noted that teachers' passion and intrinsic motivation influence classroom performance. Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasized that teachers with genuine interest in their profession show greater persistence, creativity, and effectiveness in their work. Umar and Abdullahi (2023) also linked lecturer attrition in Nigeria to a lack of career interest, which negatively affects classroom delivery. The study also found a weak but significant positive relationship between work-life balance and job performance. This means that lecturers with better work-life balance may perform better, though the relationship is not strong. This finding resonates with Haar et al. (2014), who observed that employees with good work-life balance experience reduced stress and increased productivity. Wijayanto and Riani (2021) also noted that performance in education depends not only on professional skills but also on personal well-being, which is shaped by the ability to balance work and family roles. However, the weak relationship suggests that, in the Nigerian context, lecturers' job performance may be influenced by more factors other than by work-life balance alone.

Conclusion

This research explored how career interest and work-life balance influence the professional development and job performance of technical education lecturers. The findings revealed that career interest plays a more substantial role than work-life balance in shaping both professional development and job performance. Specifically, lecturers with higher career interest demonstrated greater engagement in professional development activities and better job performance. This emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation and passion for sustained effectiveness in teaching and research. Lecturers who are inherently interested in their work are self-propelled to engage in continuous learning and to perform their duties with greater commitment and quality. Conversely, the relationships between work-life balance and the outcome variables, though statistically significant, were consistently weak. This does not mean work-life balance is irrelevant. Rather, it suggests that other factors may limit its overall impact.

Recommendations

1. During recruitment exercise for lecturers, assessments and interview questions designed to gauge genuine career interest in technical education and teaching should be prioritized.
2. Excessive workload should be alleviated to create the necessary space for lecturers to engage in professional development and achieve better work-life balance.
3. Access to funding for research and professional growth should be increased to motivate lecturers to continually improve their knowledge and skills.

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