



**WORK LIFE BALANCE WITHIN THE PRIVATE SECTOR:  
THE PREDICTIVE ROLES OF SOCIAL SUPPORT  
AND LOCUS OF CONTROL**

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**Abstract:**

The study investigated social support and locus of control as predictors of work life balance among workers. One hundred and forty one (141) workers from Stine Rice Industry, Amichi served as participants in the study, comprising 90 males (66.08%) and 51 females (33.92%). Their age ranged between 18 – 50 years with a mean age of 30.04 years and standard deviation of 8.1 years. The participants were selected using systematic and convenient sampling technique. Fisher's work life balance Scale (Fisher, 2001), Rotter internal-external locus of control scale 1966 (Rotter, 1966), and multidimensional scale of perceived social support (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988) was used for data collection. The design adopted in the research is a correlational design. Based on this, Multiple Linear Regression was adopted as the statistical tool for data analysis using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Three hypotheses were tested, and the results revealed that the first hypothesis which stated that social support would significantly predict work life balance among workers was accepted at ( $p > .05$ ,  $t = 2.161$ ). The second hypothesis which stated that locus of control would significantly predict work life balance among workers was also accepted at ( $p > .05$ ,  $t = -6.02$ ). The third hypothesis which stated that social support and locus of control would jointly predict work life balance among workers was accepted at  $F(2,138) = 24.214$ ,  $p < .05$  level of significant. Thus, based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommended that organizations should provide mechanisms that will provide support for workers in order to balance their work lives, should provide human resource initiatives that will enhance their productivity level. Also, the needs of employees are increasing owing to the many roles they play outside the work and family environment; managers are to be

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understanding when employees make requests to meet these needs. Limitations and implications of the study were also discussed.

**Keywords:** social support, locus of control, work-family balance

## 1. Introduction

Work and family are the most crucial domains in most peoples' lives. Therefore, balancing the two domains is essential for the wellbeing of an individual (Fisher, Bulger & Smith, 2009). Many people fail to reach a balance which invariably causes a work life imbalance (Brough, Holt, Bauld, Biggs & Ryan, 2008). In the wake of economic shutdown occasioned by the global pandemic and recession, expectations of workers have increased in terms of output and productivity. Unfortunately, there are reported cases of termination of workers appointment especially in Nigeria due to perceived imbalance between the demands of the family and the expectations at work which has a negative implication to productivity. Organizations in Nigeria witness scenarios where workers are exposed to long hours of work and when workers work during holidays and their off-work hours, the extra-long working hours may cause a lot of imbalances in the work and social life of the employee. The association of workers with their families during working hours affects the performance of the workers on their job roles and responsibilities, and communication between workers and their families during working hours can reduce the level of concentration of the worker thereby affecting the level of efficiency on the job. Viewing both scenarios, each perspective is significant in its own right and it is right to say that they overlap each other, At times, an individual's work life might rule over the personal life, which can be detrimental to the family life of the individual. Likewise, if the family life of the individual encroaches into the work life, it could affect the performance of the individual, which could become an issue at the individual's work place. As such, both social and work life of individuals should be balanced so as to achieve success in both areas of life.

It is in the light of the foregoing that Visser & Williams (2006) viewed work life balance as a situation in which an individual has sufficient control and autonomy over where, when and how they work to enable them to fulfill their responsibilities both inside and outside paid work. At present, work environment has become more stressful because of diverse role expectations and such changes have created several complications on both the domestic and professional fronts of the employee. Inadequate work life balance is a problem that poses a big risk to worker's wellbeing, their performance as well as the organizational performance. Many employees often have difficulties in attempting to balance employment responsibilities with their social life (Kamau, Milleke, Makaya & Wagoki, 2013).

Additionally, extensive research on the importance of a positive work life balance has attracted so many employers' attention. Progressively, employers are acknowledging their roles in this challenge by introducing and providing work life balance policies such

as flexible work hours, flexible leave and many more policies for their employees (Liddicoat, 2003).

To the best of the researchers' knowledge, and as overwhelming as the concept of work life balance is in literature, most of the attempts on it by researchers have viewed it as either a predictor variable or an independent variable. There is a paucity of research that checked the predictors of work life balance in work places. Hence, the present study attempts to view social support and locus of control as predictors of work life balance in Nnewi South, Anambra state, Nigeria.

Social support as a likely predictor of work life balance is seen as the extent to which an individual perceives that his or her needs for support information and feedback are fulfilled. It is the physical and emotional comfort given to us by our families, friends and co-workers. It is an emotional and practical assistance an individual believes is available to him or her during times of felt need (Zimet, Dahlen, Zimet & Farley 1988). Social support is the availability of helping relationships and increasing the quality of those relationships (Leavy, 1983). Social support is an important factor which contributes to work life balance, when people have social support from work and family, they can balance their lives with proper peace and harmony.

Similarly, social support is a combined instrument support, emotional support and mentoring received from both colleagues and employees (Hill, Batinuik, Dobos & Rouner, 1983). In other words, social support focuses on collaborative problem solving and sharing information, reappraising situations and obtaining advice from a variety of personnel. Recent investigations of social support have focused on evaluating the impact of support received from various sources (Brough & Frame, 2004). According to Zijlstra & Doorunen (2003), social support could be seen as the actions of others that are either helpful or intended to be helpful. It includes a variety of interpersonal behaviors among workers that enhance individuals' behavioral functioning. Bahnuik, Dobos, & Hill (2009) asserted that social support can influence individual's work life balance. Therefore, one of the targets of the present research is to take a position as to whether social support has a role in work life balance.

Interestingly, locus of control which is another construct believed to have a predictive value on work life balance is seen as the degree to which people believe that their actions influence what happens to them. In personality psychology, locus of control and social support are very important in the understanding of human behavior. Locus of control refers to the extent to which individuals believe they can control events affecting them. A person's "locus" is conceptualized as either internal (the person believes he can control his own life and believe that events from his life derive primarily from his own actions) or external (the person believe that events in his life are controlled by environmental factors, which he has little or no influence, chance or fate (Rotter, 1966). The concept was further developed by Spector (1988) who introduced the Work Locus of Control (WLOC) which deals or measures the degree of an individual's personal perception of the control in an organizational environment which is known as the job specific locus of control. The term "locus of control" was also defined by Cheng, Cheung,

Chio, & Chan (2013), where it was referred to as “*the subjective appraisal of factors that account for the occurrence of events and outcomes*”. For instance, Michel, Greenfield, Absolom & Eiser (2011) proved that individuals who are characterized with a high internal locus of control should be able to effectively balance their work and family demands, as opposed to individuals who are characterized with high levels of negative affectivity/neuroticism who generally experience more psychological distress and dissatisfaction with their work-family domains.

However, it is worth mentioning that April, Dharani & Amp; Peters (2012) has shown that individuals experience maximized happiness levels when they achieve a balanced locus of control expectancy, i.e. “*a mix of internal and external locus of control*”. Within the same scope of literature, Dijkstra, Beersma & Evans (2011) conveyed that employees’ internal locus of control does not act as a moderator between work conflict and psychological strain; however, employees who enjoy high levels of internal locus of control tend to rely on a “*problem-solving conflict management strategy*” and hence face less psychological strain when dealing with workplace conflicts. External locus of control was also directly attributed to low levels of satisfaction, happiness, and well-being (April et al., 2012). The positive outcomes of high levels of internal locus of control were also demonstrated in a study done by Hung and Hsu (2011), which indicated that higher levels of internal locus of control lead to high levels of employee commitment in the company. Importance of locus of control is obvious in the above mentioned studies, which confirmed that an internal locus of control reduced the individual's perception of work conflict and led to higher levels of work life balance.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Inadequate work life balance is a problem that poses a big risk to worker’s well-being, their performance as well as the organizational output. Many employees often have difficulties in attempting to balance employment responsibilities with their social lives and this has led to behavioral outcomes which include reduced work effort, reduced performance and increased absenteeism as well as increased stress and burnout, cognitive difficulties such as lack of concentration, low alertness and reduced levels of general health and energy. More so, when employees lack social support, depression sets in and there is an intention to quit. Additionally, workers that lack the internal locus of control may experience unhappiness, psychological distress and dysfunctional families. It is against this premise that the present study seeks to examine whether social support and locus of control are potent predictors of work life balance.

### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

#### **2.1.1 Social Exchange Theory of Social Support (Sparrowe & Liden, 1997)**

Social exchange theory is the basis for leader-member exchange (LMX; Sparrowe & Liden, 1997). This occurs when an individual engages in a behavior for someone; they expect to receive something in return. Both persons involved need to offer the other

something that is valuable and reasonable, or fair (Graen & Scandura, 1987). When there is a higher value of exchange, there is a higher quality of the relationship (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). Subordinates that have a high quality relationship with their supervisors are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs (Ning, Jian, & Crant, 2010). Campbell (1990) suggests that supervisors who see employees performing well are more likely to give those employees independence and support as it is needed. The same has been found for co-workers.

The higher the quality of the exchange relationship between co-workers, the less work-life conflict an employee will feel (Carlson & Perrew, 1999). Social exchange theory can be explained by the concept of reciprocity. According to Korsgaard, Meglino, Lester, & Jeong (2010), there are two forms of reciprocity. The first form is the obligation to reciprocate, which is the belief that someone will return a favor or engage in a behavior because they feel obligated to pay someone back. The second form of reciprocity is expected reciprocity. Expected reciprocity is the belief that if a person does something for another person, he or she should get some sort of benefit in return, in the near future. Beham (2011) and Korsgaard et al. (2010) agree that employees will act in accordance with social exchange theory. Social exchange theory is relevant to employee perceptions of supervisor support because when employees believe that an organization is being supportive of them, they will, in turn, feel the need to be supportive of, and work hard, for the organization (Korsgaard et al., 2010). As supervisors are considered the face of an organization, it is important to understand how perceptions of support on work-life balance can have an impact on an employee's work-life balance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and level of engagement. All of these outcomes can have a positive impact on the organization as a whole.

## 2.2 Hypothesis

The study was guided by the following hypotheses:

- 1) Social support would significantly predict work life balance among workers.
- 2) Locus of control would significantly predict work life balance among workers.
- 3) Social support and locus of control would jointly predict work life balance among workers.

## 3. Method

This is a survey study which adopted correlational design as a study design; consequently, multiple linear regressions were used as a statistical tool for data analysis. A total number of one hundred and forty one (141) workers from Stine Rice Industry, Amichi, Nnewi South L. G.A served as participants for the study. The participants consisted of 90 males and 51 females with a mean age of 30.4 and standard deviation of 8.1 and age range was from 18-50 years. The participants were drawn using systematic and convenient sampling where participants were selected using one (1) as nth case. The participants were drawn from the five departments of the company which

include: Administrative department, accounting department, Production department, Marketing and Advertising department. Their marital status shows that 85 persons (42.5%) are married, 56 persons (35.8%) are single and there is no divorcee. Their educational qualification also shows that 40 persons (26.5%) have tertiary certificate, 63 persons (39.9%) have senior secondary certificate (SSCE), 29 persons (18.7%) have primary school certificate while 6 persons (2.3%) have no certificate respectively.

### **3.1 Instruments**

Three different instruments were used in the study namely: Work life balance scale, Internal-external locus of control scale and multidimensional scale of perceived social support.

#### **3.1.1 Work Life Balance Scale (Hayman in 2005)**

The work life balance scale was used to measure work life balance. It was originally developed by Fisher in 2001 but was adopted by Hayman in 2005. It was designed to measure three dimensions of work life balance, i.e., work interference with personal life (7 items), personal life interference with work (4 items), and work/personal life enhancement (4 items). The first dimension, work interference with personal life included the items e.g.: Personal life suffers because of work and I put personal life on hold for work. These items reveal the extent to which work interferes with personal life. The second dimension is work interference with personal life. The items included in this component indicate the opposite direction of work personal life interference. Examples of the items include: My work suffers because of my personal life and it is hard to work because of personal matters. They illustrate the extent to which one's personal life interferes with work. The items of the third dimension, work/personal life enhancement involved positive effects of one's work on personal life or vice versa, the extent to which one's personal life increases work. The scale has a 5- point Likert response option ranging from (Strongly Disagree -1, Disagree - 2, Neither Agree nor Disagree- 3, Agree -4, Strongly Agree -5), the scoring was done as 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 for all the dimensions (except item 7, which was reverse scored. High score indicated lower interference and, lower levels of interference were interpreted as higher levels of work life balance. Some of the questionnaire items in the work life balance include: I have a better mood at work because of personal life and I struggle to juggle work and non-work.

The original developer, Fisher (2001) tested the internal consistency of the scale and obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .97 and test retest reliability of .89. Similarly, for Nigeria's suitability, Nnadozie and Steven (2015) conducted a research with the instrument, according to them, the instrument yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .73 and test retest reliability of .88.

#### **3.1.2 Locus of Control Scale (Julian Rotter, 1966)**

Internal-external locus of control scale is a self-report instrument which was developed by Julian Rotter in 1966 to evaluate the generalized control expectancies of the persons in

an internality/externality continuum. The scale consists of 29 forced choice items, 6 of which are filler items that are used to cover the purpose of the scale, other 23 items are scored as 0 or 1 point. Some of the questionnaire items in the locus of control scale include: Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, luck has little or nothing to do with it, and Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me.

Julian Rotter in 1966 tested the internal consistency and reliability of the scale and obtained a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .77 and a test retest reliability of .83. Anazonwu C. O. (1995) revalidated the instrument using Nigerian sample, His internal consistency using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the 29 items is .35 and test retest reliability is .52. Subsequently, Uwom & Osinowo (2016) in their work, the impact of locus of control and job type on the perception of autopsy among medical and non-medical workers in Oyo state adopted the locus of control scale for Nigeria context, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .59 and test retest reliability of .62 was obtained.

### 3.1.3 Social Support Scale (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley 1988)

The multidimensional scale of perceived social support developed by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet and Farley (1988) is a 12 item questionnaire, designed to measure an individual's perception of how he/she receives social support and has been tested on people from different age, groups and cultural background and found to be a reliable and valid instrument. It consists of 3 sub-scales, reflecting three sources from which an individual perceives social support, family (FA), Friend (FR) and significant others (SO). The instrument has a 7 point Likert response pattern. The responses are as follows: 1-very strongly disagree to 7-very strongly agree. Some items in the questionnaire includes: "I get emotional help and support I need from my family", and "there is a special person who is around when I am in need".

Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley (1988) tested the internal consistency of the instrument and obtained a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.73 and a test retest reliability of 0.82. Similarly, Onyeishi and Okongwu (2013) in their research adopted the multidimensional scale of perceived social support for Nigeria context, the instrument was subjected to validity and reliability test by them with a test retest reliability of 0.82 and Cronbach's alpha of 0.73 respectively.

## 4. Results

**Table 1:** Mean and Standard Deviation for Social Support, Locus of Control and Work Life Balance Score of the Respondents

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Support	141	72.67	3.474
Locus of Control	141	11.54	1.962
Work Life Balance	141	57.50	4.518

Hypothesis 1, which states that social support would significantly predict work life balance was accepted at ( $p < .05$ ,  $t = 2.161$ ) beta value is at .162. The result shows a positive significant prediction of social support on work life balance.

**Table 2:** Regression Results between work life balance and the Selected Predictors

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficient			
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	54.183	7.750		6.991	.000
Social Support *Work Life Balance	.210	.097	.162	2.161	.032
Locus of Control *Work Life Balance	-1.038	.172	-.451	- 6.017	.000

Hypothesis 2, which states that locus of control would significantly predict work life balance was accepted at ( $p < .05$ ,  $t = -6.02$ ), beta value is at -.451. The result shows a negative significant prediction of locus of control on work life balance.

**Table 3:** Regression Results between F. Statistics of the Regression Model

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	F	Sig
Regression	742.229	2	24.214	.000
		138		

Hypothesis 3, which states that social support and locus of control would jointly predict work life balance among workers, was accepted.

The F-statistics which is used to show the overall significance of the effect as shown in Table 3 show that there is overall significance between work life balance and the selected predictors.  $F(2,138) = 24.214$ ,  $P < .05$ . The hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, social support and locus of control would jointly predict work life balance among workers.

## 5. Summary of the Findings

The ANOVA table shows that there is a significant prediction of the independent variables on the dependent variables at  $F(2, 138) = 24.214$ ,  $P < .05$

The coefficient table shows the strength of each independent variable in predicting the dependent variable.

From the coefficient table, the result shows that there is a significant prediction of social support on work life balance at ( $p < .05$ ,  $t = 2.161$ ), beta value is at .162. The result shows a positive significant prediction of social support on work life balance.

The result also shows that locus of control significantly predicts work life balance at ( $p < .05$ ,  $t = -6.02$ ), beta value is at -.451. The result shows a negative significant prediction of locus of control on work life balance, because low scores on the locus of control scale mean an internal locus of control while high scores show external locus of control, it can be said that internal locus of control predict work balance at ( $p < .05$ ,  $t = -6.02$ ), beta value at -.451.

## 6. Discussion/Conclusion

This study investigated social support and locus of control as predictors of work life balance among workers of Stine Rice Mill in Amichi. The study tested three hypotheses. The first hypothesis which stated that social support would positively predict work life balance among workers was upheld. Thus, there was a positive significant prediction between social support and work life balance among workers. This suggests that increase in social support leads to increase in work life balance among workers. Hence, the more a worker feels cared for and gets adequate assistance from family, friends or co-workers, the more he feels satisfied with the work. This study is in line with the study of Kamau, Muleke, Makaya & Wagoki (2013) who investigated the relationship between work place social support, organizational commitment and work life balance among employees in selected service sector and found that there was a significant positive correlation between work place social support and work life balance.

Therefore, focusing on social support could be an effective approach in workplace to improve work life balance. It also agrees with the study of Sneha & Paryani (2014) who analyzed the joint effects of social support, stress and life satisfaction on work life balance and found a significant positive relationship between social support and work life balance. This implies that social support has effect on work life balance of the workers. This finding supports the assumption of social exchange theory which suggests that when an employee feels cared for and supported by an organization, family or co-worker in turn, these employees feel obligated to give in their best to their job/family. Also, workers who consider the organization will reciprocate the kind gesture by being more effective and more emotionally attached with the organization thereby engaging more in their duties.

Finally, it also has agreement with the reports of Nordenmark, Vinberg & Strand (2012) who explored relationship between control and demands at work, work life balance and perceived social support among self-employed men and women, perceived social support was found to be positively correlated with work life balance, so higher social support was associated with work life balance.

The second hypothesis which stated that locus of control would significantly predict work life balance among workers was also confirmed. This research is in line with the study of Mehmet & Harun (2011) who carried out a study on relationship between locus of control and perception of role ambiguity on work life balance and found a significant difference in role ambiguity of individuals with external locus of control, and also found a significant positive correlation between internal locus of control and work life balance. This implies that employees with high internal locus of control will be active to obtain opportunities in the organization. The findings are against the researcher's expectation coined from the assumption of Noraini (2010) who carried out a study on locus of control, work place social support and work-family conflict among employees in a private sector. The study examined the possible pathways by which locus of control influenced relationship between social support and work-family conflict. However, the

results showed that locus of control had no positive relationship on work family conflict. The Attribution theory makes provisions for this assertion that those with an internal locus of control are more likely to strive for achievement, work to improve their situation, apply what they learn toward positive outcomes for the future, and persist in the face of failure (Findley & Cooper, 1983). Conversely, if an individual interprets a failure in family or work as the result of a difficult task or an unfair instructor (an external locus of control), he or she may believe that his or her performance is due to factors beyond his or her control and may not see any reason to hope for future improvements. While there are advantages and disadvantages to having an internal or external locus of control in different settings, many psychologists and researchers agree that having an internal locus of control is ultimately the healthier attribute.

Finally, the third hypothesis which stated that social support and locus of control would jointly predict work life balance was also confirmed. The selected variables, social support and locus of control significantly predict work life balance in workers. If an organization is to thrive therefore, or if a worker is to effectively perform his or her task at home and work, these psychological factors cannot be overlooked. The researchers conclude that both social support (The physical and emotional comfort given to an individual by his or her family, friends and co-workers in times of need) and locus of control (the extent to which people perceive certain events to affect outcomes) are strong predictors of work life balance in the workplace.

### **6.1 Limitations of the Study**

Although the current study provided important contributions to literature in the area of social support, locus of control and work life balance, there are number of limitations that need to be considered.

- 1) It is important to note that this study involved the use of working class population who may not feel much impact of lack of social support from their family, friend or significant others, especially in the area of financial support because of their steady monthly income.
- 2) It was carried out among workers in the rural area; a combination of both rural and urban areas would have given a better direction of the link between the studied variables.
- 3) The number of subjects is small thereby making the generalization of the findings limited, therefore the result of the study should be taken with prudence in line with these limitations.

### **6.2 Recommendations**

- 1) The researchers recommend that directors/managers need to provide human resource initiatives that will enhance their employees' beliefs and feelings about balance between their work and family life. Specifically, flextime allows workers to be flexible in their work arrangements and part-time work arrangement need to be promoted in the work place.

- 2) The researchers recommend that managers of organization should try as much as possible to give employees the desired social support they need as this would improve the morale and efficiency of the employees.
- 3) The researchers also suggest that organizations should encourage a culture that harness employees and managers understand the need to maintain a good work life balance for better work place productivity and a harmonious work environment.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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