

EFFECT OF FLEXIBLE WORK ENVIRONMENT AND WORK LIFE BALANCE ON EMPLOYEE JOB PERFORMANCE: MODERATING ROLE OF SELF-REGULATORY EFFICACY

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Abstract

Employees are vital to achieving organizational goals, yet in Nigeria, the manufacturing sector, despite its potential as a key driver of economic growth contributes relatively little to GDP and underperforms compared to expectations. One major reason for this shortfall is the poor performance of employees. This study examined the moderating role of self-regulatory efficacy in the relationship between a flexible work environment, work–life balance, and employee performance in manufacturing firms. Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 422 respondents and analyzed with structural equation modeling (SEM) via the partial least squares (PLS) method using SmartPLS 4. Results revealed that both a flexible work environment and work–life balance have significant positive effects on employee performance. Additionally, self-regulatory efficacy significantly strengthened the relationship between a flexible work environment and employee performance. However, it showed no significant moderating effect between work–life balance and performance. Based on these findings, the study recommends that manufacturing firms in Kano State invest in targeted capacity-building initiatives to enhance employees’ self-regulatory skills. It also suggests institutionalizing and actively promoting flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting, flexible scheduling, and compressed workweeks, to create a more adaptable and productive workforce. These strategies could help unlock the sector’s potential, improve productivity, and strengthen its contribution to Nigeria’s economic development.

Keywords: self-regulatory efficacy, flexible work environment, work life balance and employee performance

Background to the Study

Employees are widely recognized as the foundation of organizational success across the globe. They serve as the essential agents through which strategic goals and predetermined objectives are realized, irrespective of whether they operate in the public sector or private enterprise (Mahdi, 2024). Within the structural and functional complexities of contemporary organizations, employee performance occupies a central position as a critical determinant of overall productivity across diverse economic sectors (Wider, et al., 2024).

Globally, the manufacturing sector is seen as an important driver of industrialization and a foundational pillar in the economic architecture of nations. It plays a crucial role in diversifying sources of national income, strengthening international competitiveness, and fostering socio-economic transformation (Adeyeye & Adeyeye, 2021). Its macroeconomic significance is featured by substantial contributions to global economic indicators that accounts for over 30% of aggregate GDP and approximately 35% of total employment. The sector serves as a key engine for sustained growth, structural transformation, and technological innovation (International Trade Centre [ITC], 2021).

In Nigeria, however, the manufacturing sector has remained marginal to the country's broader growth trajectory, constrained by its low GDP contribution and the underperformance of its constituent firms (Erumebor, 2025). Sectoral data from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN, 2021) indicates a persistent decline in manufacturing's share of national output (Ebe, et al., 2025). Between 2019 and 2021, the sector's average GDP contribution stood at just 9%, significantly trailing behind Malaysia's 23.47%, China's 30%, and Brazil's 25% (Kolawole, 2022). Among the multiple factors underlying this persistent decline in manufacturing's share of national output, poor employee performance remains a major constraint.

Past studies in the literature have examined determinants of employee performance across various contexts (e.g., Ebe, et al., 2025; Wider, et al., 2024; Sadler, 2022; Mahamadou, Amar, & Giraud, 2020; Mahdi, 2024). However, there remains a notable paucity of empirical research specifically investigating the interplay between flexible work environments, work-life balance, and employee performance within Nigeria's manufacturing sector (Jnaneswar & Ranjit, 2022). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no existing study has comprehensively analyzed these variables in combination as performance-enhancing mechanisms in this sectoral context.

Prior studies (e.g., Syawaludin, 2022; Sudarijati & Yani, 2020; Bhagwat, 2018; Hussain, Khaliq, Nisar, & Kamboh, 2019) consistently demonstrates a positive relationship between flexible work arrangements and employee performance, highlighting benefits for both workers and organizations. Nevertheless, these findings are largely derived from non-manufacturing sectors, which limits their applicability to industrial contexts. On the other hand, some studies (e.g., Odigie, Peter, & Orbunde, 2020; Nasidi, Makera, Kamaruddeen, & Jemaku, 2019; Makera, 2018; Gummadi & Devi, 2013) have reported no statistically significant relationship between flexible work environments and employee performance, suggesting that such effects may be highly context-specific and warrant further empirical investigation.

Within Nigerian academic and policy discourse, studies have been disproportionately concentrated on sectors such as banking, education, healthcare, and transportation, leaving the manufacturing industry comparatively underexplored. To address this sectoral imbalance, the

present study seeks to critically investigate the effects of flexible work environments and work–life balance on employee performance in Nigeria’s manufacturing sector.

Work–life balance is another significant determinant of employee performance (Karki, 2025). Nonetheless, empirical findings on this relationship have been inconsistent. Several studies (e.g., Allen et al., 2021; Joshin & Deepu, 2017; Valerie, 2019; Kate, 2018; Joan, Jennifer, & Joseph, 2015; Daniela, 2017) have reported a positive and significant association between work–life balance and employee performance. In contrast, other research (e.g., Rissanen, 2020; Mohd, Shah, & Zailan, 2016) has found no statistically significant relationship, thereby suggesting that contextual or individual-level factors may account for these disparities.

In light of these inconsistencies, the present study responds to the research gap by incorporating an additional explanatory variable, as recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986). Specifically, prior research (e.g., Rosia, Hafiz, & Yuliharsi, 2023; Heidemeier & Klaus, 2019) has highlighted self-regulatory efficacy as a personal resource that enables individuals to manage their behaviors, emotions, and efforts in ways that enhance performance outcomes. It is therefore posited that self-regulatory efficacy may serve as a moderating factor that strengthens the relationship between flexible work environments, work–life balance, and employee performance. This proposition aligns with empirical evidence suggesting that individuals with high self-regulatory efficacy are better equipped to adapt to flexible work arrangements, maintain equilibrium between professional and personal demands, and achieve higher productivity levels (Mihalca, Ratiu, Mengelkamp, Brendea, & Danie, 2024; Rosia, Hafiz, & Yuliharsi, 2023; Theobald, 2021). Accordingly, the current study aims to examine the moderating role of self-regulatory efficacy on the relationship between flexible work environments, work–life balance, and employee performance.

Given the above background, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

- H0₁:** Flexible work arrangement has not significant effect on employee performance in manufacturing firms in Kano State.
- H0₂:** Work-life balance has not significant effect on employee performance in manufacturing firms in Kano State.
- H0₃:** Self-regulatory efficacy has not significant effect on employee performance in manufacturing firms in Kano State.
- H0₄:** Self-regulatory efficacy does not significantly moderate the relationship between a work-life balance and employee performance in Kano State.
- H0₅:** Self-regulatory efficacy does not significantly moderate the relationship between a flexible work environment and employee performance in Kano State.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Concept of Employee performance

The term employee performance refers to the accomplishment of individuals in their work roles, reflecting the effort they invest to acquire meaningful tasks, engage with their responsibilities, and collaborate with supportive colleagues or employers (Hellriegel, Jackson, & Slocum, 1999; Karakas, 2010). Performance is crucial for organizations, providing information on whether they are progressing, regressing, or maintaining a steady state. This



knowledge enables organizations to adapt and enhance their services, ensuring survival and fostering growth (Boyne, Farrell, Law, Powell, & Walker, 2003). Donohoe (2019) emphasizes that employee performance is tied to how effectively workers carry out their designated job duties.

Murphy (1989) and Campbell (1990) were among the first to define the domain of individual work performance by specifying the core dimensions of generic work performance. According to Murphy, the work performance domain could be modeled using the following four dimensions: task behaviors, interpersonal behavior, and destructive/hazardous behaviors (behaviors that lead to a clear risk of productivity losses, damage, or other setbacks). On the other hand, Campbell's work performance framework proposed eight work performance dimensions, including job-specific task proficiency, non-job-specific task proficiency, written and oral communications, demonstrating effort, maintaining personal discipline, facilitating peer and team performance, supervision, and management and administration (Nwokocha's, 2017). To Campbell, these eight dimensions are sufficient to describe the latent structure of performance at a general level. However, he also noted that the eight factors can have different patterns of sub-dimensions, and their content and salience can vary across jobs. According to Samwel (2019), employee performance is characterized by the endeavors employees invest in accomplishing tasks in alignment with the organization's principles. It can be defined as the quantity of efforts exerted by employees to yield outcomes of a specified quality within an organization, all aimed at fulfilling predetermined objectives. These efforts must adhere to the established norms and procedures of the organization (Kushwaha, 2018). The assessment of employee performance involves employing a scoring system to gauge various facets of their contributions. The positive impact of enhanced employee performance extends beyond the organizational realm, potentially elevating the quality of the employee's life, augmenting their income, and contributing to economic growth by fostering increased levels of consumption (Kara, 2020).

Concept of Work-life Balance

According to Sturges and Guest (2004), the concept of work-life conflict or balance has garnered significant attention among researchers, practitioners, and academicians, as it lies at the core of issues crucial to human resource development. Work-family conflict (WFC) emerges as a form of inter-role conflict where role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible to some extent (Peng Wang et al., 2010). This conflict arises when participation in one role hinders fulfilling obligations in another. Three types of WFC have been identified: time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based. Time-based conflict occurs when individuals struggle to be present for various activities simultaneously, lacking sufficient time for both work and non-working activities such as childcare or parental care. Strain-based conflict arises when tension or anxiety from one role influences performance in the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Work interference with family (WIF) may manifest when time pressures associated with work make it physically and psychologically challenging to meet family demands, or when emotional strain from work affects one's ability to fulfill family responsibilities (Peng Wang et al., 2010). Researchers have established relationships between work-family conflict and job satisfaction in stressful work environments. WFC occurs when both forms of demand are incompatible (Hsu, 2011). There are two major facets of work-family conflict: WIF and Family

to Work Interference (FIW). Both facets have a significant direct effect on work interfering with family and family interfering with work.

Concept of Flexible Work Environments

The work environment significantly influences the comfort level of workers (Soehari et al., 2019). The concept of flexible work arrangements has gained prominence in recent decades, driven by advancements in communication technology and a growing emphasis on work-life balance. Flexible work environments, often referred to as flexible work arrangements (FWAs), represent a transformative approach to work that grants employees greater autonomy and control over aspects such as when, where, and how they perform their job tasks. These arrangements have become increasingly prevalent in response to changing societal, technological, and employee expectations (Rivai, 2006). Siswanto and Yuniawan (2012) define the workplace environment as the setting in which people work and its influence on their job performance and task completion. The variables within the workplace encompass the physical and psychosocial conditions provided to employees to enable them to achieve predefined objectives efficiently. The workplace environment is a comprehensive entity that envelops employees and impacts their task execution (Nitisemito, 1992).

Empirical Reviews

Flexible Work Environment and Employee Performance

Several studies have examined the impact of various factors on employee performance across different organizational settings. Mubarok and Suparmi (2023) found that both the flexible work environment and work responsibilities significantly influence employee performance at the Great Mosque of Demak. Tri et al. (2023) discovered that while competence and work experience did not individually affect performance, the flexible work environment had a significant impact, along with work discipline when considered together. Similarly, Sari, Ribhan, and Erlina (2021) highlighted the positive relationship between the flexible work environment, employee motivation, and performance, although motivation did not mediate the direct influence of the work environment. Muslih and Hardani (2022) found that both the work environment and workload significantly affect performance, while Putri et al. (2019), Burbar (2021), and Mustaqim and Hakim (2021) emphasized the mediating role of work discipline in enhancing performance within conducive work environments. Furthermore, Sudarijati and Yani (2019) revealed the positive impact of occupational health safety programs and flexible work conditions on employee performance, while Calvin, Mutiu, and Falola (2020) noted a significance of physical work environment and cordial working relationships in predicting employee performance. These findings collectively highlight the multifaceted nature of factors influencing employee performance across diverse organizational contexts.

Work-life and Employee Performance

Ofor, Odimegwu, and Mayah (2023) investigated the influence of work-life balance on employee performance in Nigerian ministries, finding that job sharing positively impacts performance, while work stress negatively affects it. Similarly, Irawanto, Khusnul, and Kenny (2022) explored predictors of job performance during remote work due to the pandemic, revealing that work-life balance and work stress significantly influence performance, both directly and indirectly. Khaled (2020) studied work-life balance, happiness, and performance in the pharmaceutical sector in Jordan, discovering positive effects of work-life balance and

happiness on performance. However, no significant relationship was found between job performance and employee performance. In contrast, Chiekezie, Nzewi, and Emejulu (2020) found no significant impact of work-life balance on job performance in commercial banks in Nigeria's Anambra State

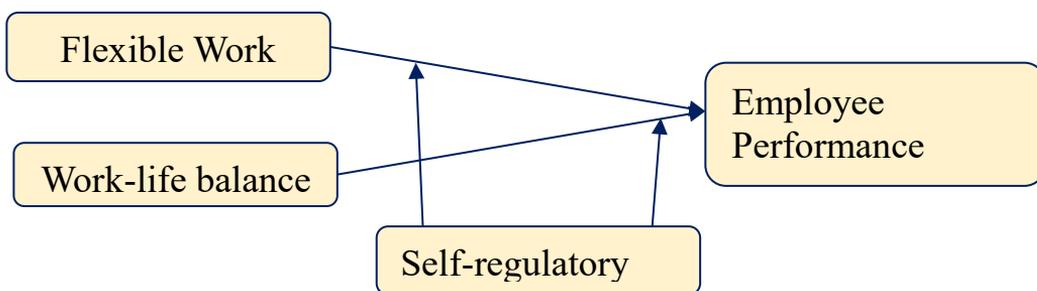
Theoretical Framework

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET), a foundational concept in various fields including sociology, political science, anthropology, and management literature, has evolved through significant contributions over the years (Cropanzano et al., 2017). At its core, SET operates on the premise of human rationality, positing that individuals engage in social interactions by weighing the potential rewards against the associated costs to maximize their outcomes (Blau, 1964). In essence, SET suggests that social behavior is akin to a transactional process between two parties, driven by the pursuit of maximizing benefits while minimizing costs (Cherry, 2020). This conceptualization highlights the notion that human interactions involve an exchange, encompassing both tangible assets such as resources and money, as well as intangible elements like respect, trust, and empathy (Homans, 1961).

Homans notably expanded the notion of exchange beyond material goods to encompass intangible values crucial in interpersonal interactions (Homans, 1958). Blau, on the other hand, indicates the significance of flexible work place in reciprocal relationships, advocating for fairness in exchange proportional to individual efforts (Blau, 1961). He also distinguished social exchange from economic transactions by highlighting the presence of unspecified commitments and personal factors influencing exchanges between established partners, thereby deviating from the standardized pricing mechanisms found in economic exchanges (Blau, 1961). Ultimately, these early contributions form the bedrock of SET, providing insights into the multifaceted nature of social interactions and the rational decision-making processes underlying them.

Research Model





Research Methodology

The study employed a survey research methodology with a quantitative design, utilizing a structured questionnaire systematically administered to participants. The research focused on employees of manufacturing firms in Kano State, comprising a total population of 2443 employees. From this population, a sample of 332 respondents was selected using Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) formula, employing a simple random sampling method for its effectiveness and representativeness. To address potential non-response issues, the study followed Salkind’s approach for adjusting the number of respondents, a method commonly employed in survey research as suggested by Bartlett, Kotrlik, and Higgins (2001). Following the guidance of Hair et al. (2020), the sample size was increased by 50% to reach 498 participants. Data collection involved administering 498 questionnaires to employees of manufacturing firms, resulting in 434 valid responses suitable for analysis. Structural equation modeling was employed for data analysis, specifically utilizing partial least squares implemented through Smart PLS4.

Results and Discussion

Measurement Model

The measurement model is part of the SEM model, which describes the relationships among the latent variables and their indicators (Becker et al. 2012). The measurement model shows that all the study constructs had Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of more than the threshold of 0.5 and Composite Reliability (CR) of more than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2019). This indicates that the convergent validity of the construct is adequate as all constructs have their AVE from 0.543 to 0.692 as shown in Table 1. Additionally, the internal consistency of the constructs was measured using composite reliability measure (Hair et al, 2019). As can be seen, all the composite reliability of the constructs are above 0.70.

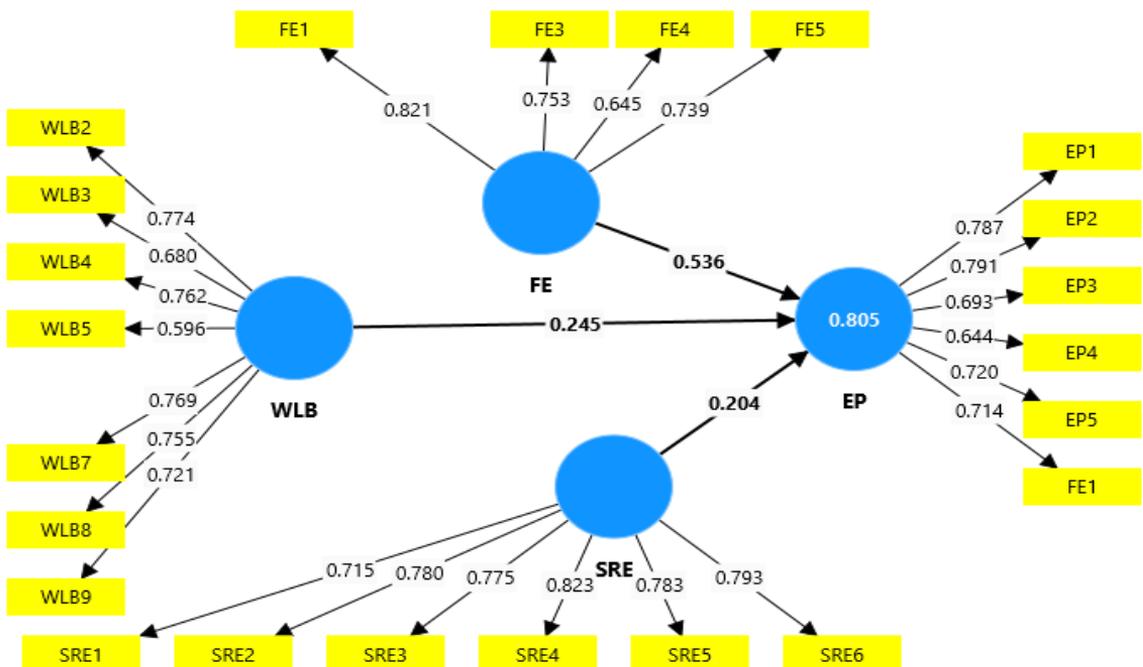




Figure 1: Measurement Model

Table 1: Items Loading, Average Variance Extracted and Composite Reliability

Variable	Code	Loadings	AVE	Composite Reliability
Employee Performance	EP1	0.787	0.528	0.825
	EP2	0.791		
	EP3	0.693		
	EP4	0.644		
	EP5	0.720		
Flexible Environment	FE1	0.821	0.550	0.736
	FE2	0.714		
	FE3	0.753		
	FE4	0.645		
	FE5	0.739		
Work-life Balance	WLB2	0.774	0.525	0.850
	WLB3	0.680		
	WLB4	0.762		
	WLB5	0.596		
	WLB7	0.769		
	WLB8	0.755		
	WLB9	0.721		
Self-regulatory efficacy	SRE1	0.715	0.543	0.870
	SRE2	0.780		
	SRE3	0.775		
	SRE4	0.823		
	SRE5	0.783		
	SRE6	0.793		

Structural Model

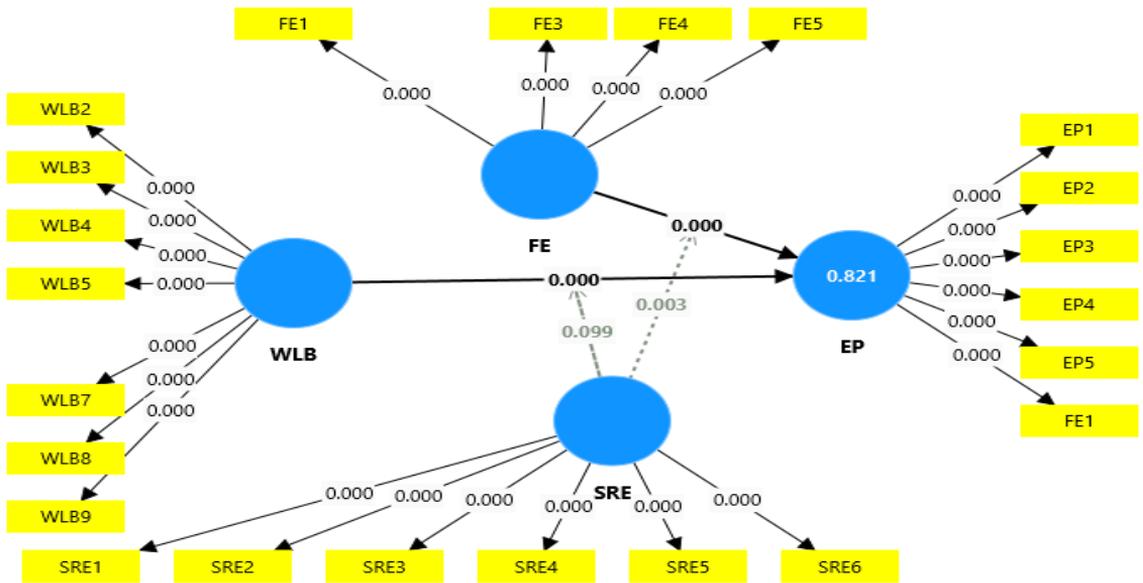


Figure 2: PLS Algorithm for Direct and Moderating Relationship

Table 2: Test of Hypotheses

Hyp	Relationship	Beta value	SD	T-value	P values	Decision
H01	FE -> EP	0.455	0.041	11.052	0.000	Reject
H02	WLB -> EP	0.219	0.044	4.927	0.000	Reject
H03	SRE -> EP	0.185	0.033	5.549	0.000	Reject
H04	SRE x WLB -> EP	0.082	0.050	1.648	0.099	Failed to reject
H05	SRE x FE -> EP	0.147	0.050	2.927	0.003	Reject

The coefficient of determination (R² value) of this model is 0.821. This shows that the independent variables of the study account for variation in employee performance by 82.1%. Hence, the remaining 17.9% is explained by other variables not captured in the model. As can be seen in Figure 2 and Table 2, the hypothesis one that stated that flexible work arrangement has not significant effect on employee performance in manufacturing firms in Kano State was rejected ($\beta=0.455$, $T= 11.052$, $P<0.05$). Also, the second hypothesis which stated that work-life balance has not significant effect on employee performance in manufacturing firms in Kano State. was also rejected ($\beta=0.219$, $T= 4.927$, $P<0.05$). The third hypothesis that stated that self-regulatory efficacy has not significant effect on employee performance in manufacturing firms in Kano State was rejected too ($\beta=0.185$, $T= 5.549$, $P<0.05$). While for the moderating relationship, hypothesis fifth which stated that self-regulatory efficacy does not significantly moderate the relationship between a flexible work environment and employee performance in Kano State was rejected ($\beta=0.147$, $T= 2.927$, $P<0.05$). However, the fourth hypothesis which stated that self-regulatory efficacy does not significantly moderate the relationship between a work-life balance and employee performance in Kano State was failed to be rejected ($\beta=0.082$, $T= 1.648$, $P>0.05$).

Discussion of Findings

The study uncovered a significant positive relationship between a flexible work environment and employee performance. This suggests that as the level of flexibility in the work environment increases, so does employee job performance. This finding aligns with previous studies conducted by Nasidi et al. (2019), Makera (2018), and Gummadi and Devi (2013), indicating that higher-quality flexible work environments lead to improved employee performance.

Similarly, the research identified a significant positive impact of work-life balance initiatives on employee performance. This implies that when employees are exposed to work-life balance initiatives, it positively influences their performance in the workplace. This can be achieved through management introducing favorable work-life balance programs such as staff scholarship programs, advance salary payments, time management initiatives, paid vacation time, maternity and paternity leave, bereavement leave, childcare facilities, and employee assistance programs, among others. This finding is consistent with previous research conducted by Joshin & Deepu (2017), Valerie (2019), Kate (2018), and Joan, Jennifer, & Joseph (2015). Moreover, the study revealed that self-regulatory efficacy significantly moderates the relationship between a flexible work environment and employee performance. This indicates that self-regulatory efficacy strengthens the relationship between a flexible work environment and employee performance, as expected. It is anticipated that when self-regulatory efficacy interacts with a flexible work environment, job performance levels increase. This finding is supported by research conducted by Theobald (2021), Mihalca et al. (2024), and Turhan and Serdar (2016). However, contrary to expectations, the study found that self-regulatory efficacy does not significantly moderate the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance. This finding diverges from the study's initial expectations

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study concludes that flexible work arrangements and work-life balance are significant predictors of employee performance. Furthermore, self-regulatory efficacy was found to moderate the relationship between flexible work arrangements and employee performance. However, its moderating effect on the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance was not statistically significant. In light of these findings, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Manufacturing firms in Kano State should invest in initiatives that enhance employees' self-regulatory efficacy. This can be achieved through targeted training, workshops, and coaching sessions that emphasize self-management, goal-setting, and personal accountability skills.
- ii. Organizations should adopt and actively promote flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting, flexible working hours, and compressed workweeks. These strategies can empower employees to manage both their professional duties and personal commitments more effectively, thereby improving work-life balance.
- iii. Employers should provide resources and support systems to facilitate employees' work-life balance. Examples include on-site childcare facilities, health and wellness programs, and access to counseling services to help employees manage personal and professional challenges more efficiently.
- iv. Encouraging open communication and offering regular, constructive feedback can help employees feel valued and supported. Managers should receive training to deliver

feedback effectively and to grant flexibility where appropriate to accommodate employees' varying needs.

Suggestions for Further Research

The present study examined the moderating role of self-regulatory efficacy in the relationship between a flexible work environment, work–life balance, and employee performance. Future research should consider exploring potential mediating variables that could explain how self-regulatory efficacy, flexible work arrangements, and work–life balance influence employee performance. Mediators such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and psychological well-being may act as key pathways through which these relationships manifest. Identifying and understanding these mediating mechanisms would not only enhance theoretical clarity but also provide practical guidance for organizations seeking to optimize employee outcomes.

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