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Work Life Harmony and Employee Career Advancement in Quick Service Restaurants, South East, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the relationship between work-life harmony and employee career advancement in quick service restaurants (QSRs) across Southeast Nigeria. The study specifically evaluated the effect of perceived organizational support**,** family responsibility**,** and societal expectation on employee career advancement. A descriptive survey research design was adopted to collect quantitative data from a sample of 354 employees selected from twelve major QSRs located in Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Ebonyi, and Abia States. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire validated by experts, and reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.882, indicating strong internal consistency. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for data analysis, while multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance using SPSS version 23. The findings revealed that perceived organizational support had a positive and statistically significant effect on employee career advancement, indicating that employees who feel supported by their organizations are more likely to progress in their careers. Family responsibility also showed a strong positive and significant influence on career advancement, suggesting that effective management of family roles enhances career growth. However, societal expectation did not have a statistically significant impact on employee career advancement. The study concludes that elements of work-life harmony particularly organizational support and family responsibility management significantly foster career advancement in QSRs. It recommends that QSRs strengthen mentorship programs, provide family-friendly policies, and institutionalize wellness initiatives to enhance employee development and retention.

Keywords: Work-life harmony, employee career advancement, perceived organizational support, family responsibility, societal expectation, quick service restaurants.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, scholars and practitioners have moved from discussing work life balance as a narrow personnel concern to viewing work life harmony as a strategic organizational issue that affects employee well-being, motivation, and career

advancement. Earlier global work family research framed the issue as a conflict between roles in work and family domains. More recent studies have taken a broader view, emphasizing how organizational policies, supervisory support, and social norms shape whether employees experience harmony or persistent conflict between work and personal life. In Nigeria, this shift is evident in studies that link work life arrangements to measurable outcomes such as job satisfaction, employee retention, and career progression, making the concept both academically and practically relevant to labor-intensive service sectors (Okafor and Ugochukwu, 2021; Eze and Nwankwo, 2022).

According to Adedeji & Ezeabasili (2018), the quick service restaurant sector, characterized by long working hours, customer interaction, and fast-paced operations, presents unique work life challenges. International research highlights that employees in fast-food and quick-service outlets often face high staff turnover, erratic schedules, and limited opportunities for career progression. Nigerian studies in the food and beverage sector reveal similar challenges such as poor work schedules, heavy workloads, and limited training, all of which hinder employees' skill development and upward mobility (Chukwujekwu & Ezeabasili, 2019). Career advancement in quick service restaurants depends not only on formal promotion systems but also on consistent work performance, learning opportunities, and managerial support. When employees face work life imbalance, their ability to grow within the organization is significantly affected (Adeleke and Yusuf, 2021; Chukwu and Nnadi, 2023).

Nigeria's socio-economic and cultural context adds further relevance to this study. Economic pressures, extended family obligations, and gender expectations regarding caregiving increase work family strains for many Nigerian workers. Studies have shown that long working hours, lack of flexible work arrangements, and unequal domestic roles affect employees' commitment and career outcomes. In the hospitality and restaurant industries, these issues are pronounced due to the nature of the work, which often requires shift duties and weekend engagements. Employers in Nigeria are increasingly recognizing that improving work life harmony can reduce turnover and improve productivity, making this topic timely and significant (Oluwole and Adebayo, 2020; Nwachukwu and Eze, 2024; Eze, Nwakwo & Okeke, 2025).

According to Okeke (2025), focusing on the South East region is important because it has a fast-growing hospitality and retail industry, providing employment opportunities for many young people. Quick service restaurants have become a key feature of urban centers such as Awka, Onitsha, and Nnewi in Anambra State. However, employees in these establishments often face poor working conditions and limited career development opportunities. By focusing on Anambra State, this study engages with the realities of the regional labor market, where issues such as employee motivation, job mobility, and informal management practices influence workforce stability. The findings from this study will therefore reflect the unique socio-economic and cultural factors of the area (Ike and Obiora, 2023; Okonkwo, 2022; Nwafor, Nwankwo, Okeke & Chendo, 2025).

Nigerian studies on work life issues have tended to focus either on the organizational level, such as policy availability and managerial attitudes, or on the household level, such as domestic obligations and time management. However, few have explored how work life harmony as a multidimensional concept relates directly to employee career advancement in a high-turnover sector like

quick service restaurants. Recent empirical studies in Nigeria have called for more research that connects employees' perceptions of support, family obligations, and social expectations to their opportunities for promotion and personal development. This study responds to that need by examining these dynamics within the Anambra State quick service restaurant sector (Okeke, 2024; Eze and Nwachukwu, 2023; Okafor, 2024; Unukpo, Nwankwo, Chendo & Okeke, 2025).

Three major variables of work life harmony will guide this study. These are perceived organizational support, family responsibility, and societal expectation. Perceived organizational support refers to the extent to which employees believe their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. When employees feel supported, they are more motivated and willing to pursue career development opportunities. Family responsibility involves the caregiving duties and household obligations that employees must balance with their work roles. These responsibilities often limit the time and flexibility required for career growth. Societal expectation refers to the cultural and social norms that define appropriate roles for men and women, influencing how employees manage their careers and personal lives. Together, these three variables provide a framework for understanding how organizational practices and social pressures interact to affect career advancement in the quick service restaurant industry (Adeyemi and Okechukwu, 2021; Nnamani and Udeh, 2022; Okeke & Ahaiwe, 2024; Ezeabasili & Amaefuna, 2024).

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, the Nigerian quick service restaurant (QSR) industry has witnessed rapid growth due to urbanization, changing consumer preferences, and the rise of youth employment in the hospitality sector. Despite this expansion, employees in QSRs continue to experience challenges in maintaining work life harmony. The demanding nature of restaurant operations, characterized by long and irregular working hours, shift duties, and constant customer engagement, leaves little room for personal, family, or social activities. As a result, many employees experience burnout, low motivation, and limited opportunities for career advancement. These issues raise concerns about how the lack of work life harmony affects employee growth, productivity, and organizational stability in a sector that heavily depends on human capital.

A major problem lies in inadequate perceived organizational support**.** Many QSR employees in Nigeria, especially in Anambra State, feel undervalued and unsupported by their employers. Organizations rarely provide flexible schedules, welfare programs, or career development opportunities to help workers balance their professional and personal lives. Consequently, employees often perceive that management is only concerned with immediate business performance rather than their well-being or long-term growth. This perception negatively influences commitment, reduces job satisfaction, and limits motivation for career advancement.

Another problem arises from family responsibilities, which significantly affect employees' ability to grow in their careers. Many workers, especially women, face the dual burden of job responsibilities and family obligations such as childcare, eldercare, and domestic duties. The absence of family-friendly policies or flexible working arrangements in QSRs makes it difficult for employees to perform optimally and pursue further training or promotions. This challenge not only hinders individual career progression but also contributes to high staff turnover and reduced workforce stability in the industry.

A third specific problem is societal expectation**,** which often shapes how employees manage the balance between work and family roles. In the Nigerian context, societal norms and cultural beliefs assign specific gender roles and obligations, especially to women, making it difficult for them to dedicate sufficient time to career growth. At the same time, societal pressure on men to provide financially often drives them to work excessive hours, neglecting personal and family life. These conflicting social expectations create tension that affects employees' productivity and progression within the organization.

Given these challenges, there remains a clear gap in understanding how work life harmony influences employee career advancement in the QSR industry in South-East Nigeria, particularly in Anambra State**.** Most existing studies have examined work life balance in banking, education, or manufacturing sectors, with limited attention to the hospitality and quick service restaurant industry. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by investigating how perceived organizational support, family responsibility, and societal expectation interact to affect employee career advancement in QSRs. The outcome of this study will provide insights that can guide policy formulation and management practices for improved employee well-being and career growth in the sector.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between Work life harmony and employees turnover in quick service restaurants, South East, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

i. Evaluate the effect of perceived organizational support on employee career advancement in quick service restaurants, South East, Nigeria.
ii. Assess the effect of family responsibility on employee career advancement in quick service restaurants, South East, Nigeria.
iii. Examine the influence of societal expectation on employee career advancement in quick service restaurants, South East, Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The Hypotheses for the study are formulated as thus:

Ho_1: Perceived organizational support has no significant effect on employee career advancement in quick service restaurants, South East, Nigeria.

Ho_2: Family responsibility has no significant effect on employee career advancement in quick service restaurants, South East, Nigeria.

Ho_3: Societal expectation has no significant effect on employee career advancement in quick service restaurants, South East, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work-Life Harmony

Work-life harmony refers to the integration and balance between work responsibilities and personal life activities. Unlike the traditional concept of work-life balance, which implies a strict separation and equal distribution of time and energy between work and personal life, work-life harmony focuses on the fluidity and synergy between the two domains (Smith, 2020). This approach acknowledges that the boundaries between work and life are often blurred and seeks to create a more holistic and sustainable approach to managing these interconnected spheres.

The concept of work-life harmony/balance has evolved significantly in recent years, especially with the increasing complexity of modern work environments and the rise of remote and flexible work arrangements. Lee (2021), work-life harmony emphasizes the

importance of aligning personal values and professional goals, fostering an environment where employees can thrive both at work and in their personal lives. According to Ifeoma (2011), this shift reflects a growing recognition that a one-size-fits-all approach to work-life balance is inadequate in addressing the diverse needs and preferences of the workforce.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

Perceived organizational support (POS) refers to employees' perception of how much the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. This concept has gained significant attention in organizational behavior research as it highlights the reciprocal relationship between employees and their employers. According to Eisenberger et al. (2020), POS is crucial for fostering a supportive work environment that enhances employee motivation, commitment, and overall job satisfaction. It encapsulates the degree to which employees believe their organization recognizes and appreciates their efforts and concerns.

The evolution of POS has seen an expansion in its components and the factors influencing it. Recent studies have identified various antecedents of POS, including fair treatment, supervisor support, and recognition. Lee (2021) emphasizes that employees who perceive high levels of organizational support are more likely to exhibit positive work attitudes and behaviors, such as increased job performance and reduced turnover intentions. The relationship between POS and these positive outcomes is mediated by the psychological mechanisms of felt obligation, trust, and organizational commitment.

A critical element of POS is the role of leadership and management practices. Effective leadership that demonstrates genuine concern for employees' needs and Career Advancement significantly enhances POS. According to Johnson (2022), transformational leadership, which involves inspiring and motivating employees while addressing their individual needs, is particularly effective in fostering POS. Leaders who communicate transparently, provide regular feedback, and involve employees in decision-making processes contribute to a higher perception of organizational support.

Flexible Work

Flexible work refers to employment arrangements that allow employees to have control over when, where, and how they work, differing from traditional work schedules. This concept has gained increasing importance in contemporary work environments due to its potential to improve work-life balance, enhance employee satisfaction, and boost productivity. According to Davis and Green (2020), flexible work includes practices such as telecommuting, flextime, compressed workweeks, and job sharing. These arrangements enable employees to tailor their work schedules to better align with their personal and family needs.

The rise of flexible work has been driven by several factors, including technological advancements, changing workforce demographics, and evolving employee expectations. Digital tools and communication technologies have made it easier for employees to work remotely and maintain connectivity with their colleagues and managers. Moreover, the growing presence of millennial and Gen Z in the workforce, who prioritize work-life balance and flexibility, has pushed organizations to adopt more flexible work policies (Smith & Johnson, 2021; Ethel, 2022; Ugochukwu, Ezeabasili & Ostar, 2020). These trends reflect a shift towards a more employee-centric approach to work design.

Research has shown that flexible work arrangements can lead to numerous benefits for both employees and employers. Employees often report higher job satisfaction, reduced stress, and improved mental health when they have the flexibility to manage their work and personal responsibilities. From the employer's perspective, flexible work can enhance productivity, reduce absenteeism, and increase employee retention. According to a study by Lee et al. (2022), companies that implement flexible work policies often experience a more engaged and motivated workforce, which translates into better overall performance.

Family Responsibility

Family responsibility refers to the obligations and duties individuals have towards their family members, encompassing a wide range of activities such as childcare, eldercare, and household management. This concept has gained significant attention in recent years, particularly in the context of work-life balance and employee well-being. According to Greenhaus and Powell (2020), family responsibility is a critical factor influencing employees' ability to balance their professional and personal lives, impacting their overall satisfaction and performance at work.

The increasing complexity of family structures and the diverse nature of family roles have made family responsibility a central issue for both employees and employers. Factors such as dual-income households, single-parent families, and extended family care have added layers of responsibility that individuals must manage alongside their professional duties (Hughes & Park, 2021; Ifeoma, 2011; Nwanolue, Ezeabasili & Obiora, 2018). These responsibilities can vary significantly based on cultural, societal, and economic contexts, necessitating a nuanced understanding of how family roles intersect with work demands.

Work-family conflict arises when the demands of work and family responsibilities are incompatible, leading to stress and reduced well-being. This conflict can manifest in various forms, such as time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based conflicts. Recent studies have shown that work-family conflict negatively impacts job satisfaction, mental health, and organizational commitment (Smith & Jones, 2022). Effective organizational policies, such as flexible work arrangements, parental leave, and family support programs, are essential in mitigating these conflicts and supporting employees in fulfilling their family responsibilities.

The pandemic has further highlighted the challenges associated with family responsibilities, as many employees have had to juggle remote work with increased caregiving duties. The shift to remote work has blurred the boundaries between work and home life, exacerbating work-family conflict for many individuals (Garcia & Thompson, 2021). Organizations that have recognized these challenges and provided resources and support, such as flexible schedules and mental health services, have seen improved employee well-being and productivity during this period.

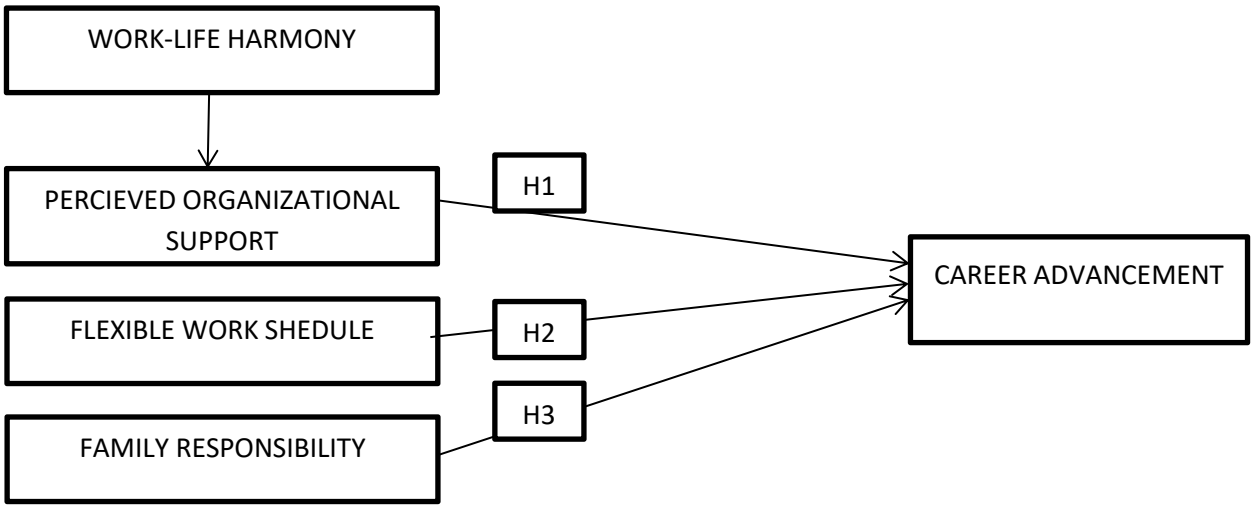
Career Advancement

Career advancement refers to the upward progression in an individual's professional life, often marked by promotions, increased responsibilities, and higher levels of compensation. It encompasses the various steps and milestones that employees achieve as they develop their skills, gain experience, and take on more significant roles within an organization. According to Smith et al. (2020), career advancement is a critical component of professional growth and is influenced by a range of factors including individual ambition,

organizational policies, and broader economic conditions.

The determinants of career advancement are multifaceted and include both individual and organizational factors. Personal attributes such as skills, education, and work performance play a significant role. Additionally, networking, mentorship, and continuous learning are essential elements that facilitate career growth (Jones & Cooper, 2021). On the organizational side, companies that provide clear career paths, development programs, and opportunities for internal mobility tend to have employees who are more motivated and engaged. This support can be in the form of formal training programs, performance appraisals, and leadership development initiatives.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework



SOURCE: QSR Work Life Harmony and Employee Turnover Framework (Abayol, 2024).

Theoretical frame work
Work-Life Border Theory

This study was anchored on work-life border theory. Work-Life Border Theory was primarily developed by Clark in 2000, offering a significant framework for understanding how individuals manage the boundaries between their work and personal lives. This theory introduced several key concepts that provide insights into how people navigate their responsibilities across different life domains. Clark's theory emphasizes that work and personal life are distinct yet overlapping areas, and individuals use various strategies to manage the boundaries between them. These boundaries can be categorized as work-family borders and family-work borders, reflecting how responsibilities in one area can affect the other. For instance, work-family borders pertain to how individuals keep their work life separate from their family life, while family-work borders address how personal life demands can influence work responsibilities.

The theory identifies two primary types of boundary management strategies: segmentation and integration. Segmentation involves maintaining a clear separation between work and personal life, while integration involves a more fluid interaction between these domains. Individuals choose strategies based on personal preferences, organizational culture, and the nature of their work. The effectiveness of these strategies can impact job satisfaction, stress levels, and overall well-being.

Clark also introduces the concepts of boundary strength and flexibility. Strong boundaries are characterized by a clear demarcation between work and personal life, which helps prevent one from intruding into the other. In contrast, flexible boundaries allow for a more fluid interaction between work and personal responsibilities. The ability to manage these boundaries effectively is crucial for achieving work-life harmony and reducing stress.

The Work-Life Border Theory has been influential in shifting the focus from traditional work-life balance models to a more nuanced understanding of boundary management. It highlights that effective boundary management can lead to better work-life harmony, improved job performance, and enhanced employee well-being. By providing a framework for studying how individuals navigate their work and personal lives, the theory has made significant contributions to research in organizational behavior and work-life integration.

Theoretical Exposition

Perceived Organizational Support and Employee Career Advancement

The relationship between perceived organizational support and career advancement has been a significant focus in organizational behavior research, particularly as organizations strive to create environments that foster employee growth and development. Perceived organizational support (POS) refers to employees' perceptions that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 2020). This perception can profoundly influence various aspects of an employee's career, including their motivation, job satisfaction, and ultimately, their opportunities for career advancement.

Recent studies have shown that high levels of perceived organizational support are positively associated with career advancement. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2021), employees who feel supported by their organization are more likely to experience enhanced job satisfaction and engagement, which in turn positively affects their career progression. The support from the organization can take many forms, including mentoring, recognition of achievements, and provision of resources for Career Advancement. These factors collectively contribute to an environment where employees are better positioned for promotions and career growth.

Flexible Work Schedule and Employee Career Advancement

A flexible work schedule, increasingly adopted in modern organizations, plays a significant role in shaping employee career advancement. Flexibility, often characterized by the ability to modify working hours or perform tasks remotely, provides employees with greater control over their work-life balance and professional growth. Gajendran and Harrison (2020), flexible work arrangements enhance employees' autonomy and sense of control, enabling them to manage their time effectively and pursue developmental opportunities such as training, skill acquisition, and education. When employees have the freedom to structure their

work schedules, they are better positioned to balance professional responsibilities with personal growth initiatives, which can enhance their readiness for career progression.

Furthermore, flexible work schedules contribute positively to employees' motivation and engagement, which are vital drivers of career advancement. Wheatley (2021) emphasized that organizations offering flexible working options create environments that support employee well-being and commitment. Such environments foster higher levels of job satisfaction and loyalty, encouraging employees to invest more effort in their work and professional development. When workers experience reduced stress and burnout due to flexible scheduling, they are more likely to maintain high performance levels and demonstrate competencies that position them for promotion and career growth.

In addition, flexible work arrangements facilitate equal opportunities for advancement by accommodating diverse employee needs. Schieman and Glavin (2021) noted that flexibility can be particularly advantageous for employees with family or caregiving responsibilities, as it allows them to pursue career goals without sacrificing personal obligations. This inclusivity ensures that all employees, regardless of their personal circumstances, have access to growth opportunities within the organization. Consequently, a flexible work culture supports the development of a more diverse leadership pipeline and promotes fairness in career progression.

Overall, flexible work schedules not only improve employees' work-life harmony but also enhance their potential for career advancement. By fostering autonomy, reducing stress, and promoting inclusivity, flexible scheduling empowers employees to perform effectively while pursuing long-term professional goals. Organizations that prioritize flexibility, therefore, not only strengthen their workplace culture but also cultivate a motivated and progressive workforce capable of driving sustainable growth and innovation.

Family Responsibility and Career Advancement

The relationship between family responsibility and career advancement is a dynamic and multifaceted one, significantly influenced by individual circumstances and organizational practices. Recent studies have highlighted that family responsibilities, including caregiving for children or elderly relatives, can impact Career Advancement opportunities and career progression. For instance, Ayalon and Shvartz (2021) found that employees with substantial family obligations often face barriers to participating in training and development programs, which can hinder their career advancement. The study suggests that balancing family responsibilities with professional growth requires both personal and organizational strategies to mitigate potential conflicts.

Work-family conflict, as discussed by Kalleberg and Van Buren (2022), is a significant factor affecting career advancement. Their research indicates that employees who experience high levels of work-family conflict are more likely to have limited access to career advancement opportunities, such as promotions or skill enhancement programs. This conflict arises when the demands of work and family roles are incompatible, leading to stress and reduced participation in career advancement activities. The study underscores the importance of supportive workplace policies that address these conflicts to enable employees to pursue career growth while managing family responsibilities effectively.

Conversely, positive family support can enhance career advancement outcomes. Research by Ladd and Henry (2023) highlights that family support systems, including flexible work arrangements and encouragement from family members, can positively influence employees' ability to engage in Career Advancement. Their study demonstrates that employees who receive adequate support at home are more likely to invest in their careers, pursue advanced training, and achieve career milestones. This positive relationship suggests that organizations can benefit from recognizing and facilitating the role of family support in employees' professional growth.

Empirical Review

Nnamdi and Eze (2022) examined the influence of overtime compensation on employee satisfaction at Swift Eats in Kano. The study involved 300 employees, using systematic sampling to select 120 participants. Chi-Square Test results showed that fair overtime compensation significantly improves employee satisfaction. The conclusion was that compensating employees adequately for overtime work enhances their satisfaction, recommending the establishment of fair overtime compensation policies.

Funke and Adeyemi (2022) investigated the role of part-time employment options on work-life harmony at Suya Hut in Lagos, Nigeria. The study involved 200 employees, using cluster sampling to select 80 participants. T-test results indicated that part-time employment options significantly enhance work-life harmony. The conclusion was that part-time work arrangements allow employees to balance work and personal commitments better, recommending the provision of part-time options to improve work-life balance.

Musa and Ibrahim (2021) examined the influence of on-site childcare facilities on work-life balance at Fast Food Delight in Kano, Nigeria. The study included 350 employees, with 140 selected through convenience sampling. Correlation analysis revealed that on-site childcare facilities significantly improve work-life balance. The study concluded that accessible childcare services help employees manage their family responsibilities, recommending the establishment of on-site childcare facilities to support work-life harmony.

Temitayo Adeola (2021) studied the impact of part-time employment options on work-life harmony at Rapid Food Services in Ibadan. The study included 350 employees, with 140 selected through convenience sampling. Correlation analysis revealed that part-time employment options significantly improve work-life harmony. The study concluded that offering part-time roles allows employees to better manage their work and personal lives, recommending the provision of part-time employment options.

Grace Olatunji (2021) examined the effect of flexible work hours on work-life balance among young employees at Jollof Express in Lagos, Nigeria. The study involved 300 employees, using stratified random sampling to select 120 participants. Regression analysis revealed that flexible work hours significantly improve work-life balance. The conclusion was that flexible schedules help employees better manage their personal and professional lives, recommending the implementation of flexible work hours to enhance work-life harmony.

Usman and Aliyu (2021) studied the impact of shift scheduling flexibility on job satisfaction at Quick Meals in Kano. The study involved 300 employees, using systematic sampling to select 120 participants.

Chi-Square Test results showed that shift scheduling flexibility significantly enhances job satisfaction. The conclusion was that flexible shift schedules lead to higher job satisfaction, recommending flexible scheduling policies to improve work-life balance.

Chidinma and Okonkwo (2020) explored the effect of transportation allowances on work-life balance at Swift Serve in Lagos. The study included 250 employees, using purposive sampling to select 100 participants. Factor analysis indicated that transportation allowances significantly improve work-life balance. The conclusion was that providing transportation support enhances employees' ability to balance work and personal life, recommending the provision of transportation allowances.

Adaeze and Nwosu (2020) studied the impact of shift scheduling practices on work-life harmony at Tasty Time in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The study involved 300 employees, using systematic sampling to select 120 participants. Chi-Square Test results showed that flexible shift scheduling significantly enhances work-life harmony. The conclusion was that accommodating shift schedules allow employees to balance their work and personal lives, recommending flexible shift scheduling practices to promote work-life balance.

Amina Suleiman (2019) examined the impact of flexible working hours on employee productivity at Fast Food Delight in Lagos. The study involved 400 employees, using stratified random sampling to select 160 participants. Multiple regression analysis revealed that flexible working hours significantly improve employee productivity. The conclusion was that flexibility in work schedules enhances productivity, recommending the implementation of flexible working hours policies.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the relationship between work-life harmony and employee career advancement in quick service restaurants (QSRs) across Southeast Nigeria. The design was considered appropriate because it allows the collection of data from a large number of respondents, enabling the researcher to describe, analyze, and interpret existing conditions without manipulating any variables. This method was used to capture employees' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes towards the effect of work-life harmony on their career growth while minimizing bias and ensuring data reliability.

The area of the study covered the five states of Southeast Nigeria Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Ebonyi, and Abia which collectively represent a region known for its entrepreneurial dynamism and growing hospitality sector. These states were chosen because of their economic activities and the rapid expansion of quick service restaurants operating within them. The target population consisted of 3,096 employees working in 12 major QSRs that met specific inclusion criteria, such as being standard fast-food outlets with multiple branches and diverse product lines. A total sample size of 354 employees was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula at a 95 percent confidence level and a 0.05 margin of error. A multistage sampling approach was adopted, where QSRs were first selected purposively, followed by stratified random sampling across the five states to ensure proportional representation of employees.

Data for the study were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were gathered using a structured questionnaire divided into two sections: Section A focused on demographic

information, while Section B captured items relating to the independent variable (work-life harmony) and the dependent variable (employee career advancement). The questionnaire was designed to elicit detailed and relevant information from respondents regarding their perceptions and experiences. Secondary data were collected from textbooks, academic journals, and online publications to provide theoretical and empirical support to the study. To ensure validity, the instrument was reviewed by academic experts to assess its face and content adequacy. Reliability was established using the test-retest method, and a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.882 confirmed that the instrument was internally consistent and dependable.

The data analysis involved the use of both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency, and standard deviation were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and key variables of the study. Inferential statistics, specifically multiple regression analysis, were employed to examine the relationship between work-life harmony and employee career advancement. All analyses were carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0, and hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. This analytical approach provided a robust framework for understanding the extent to which perceived organizational support, family responsibility, and societal expectation influence the career advancement of employees in quick service restaurants in Southeast Nigeria.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Test of hypotheses for (Model 1)

Ho_1: Perceived organizational support has no significant effect on employee career advancement in quick service restaurants, South East, Nigeria.

Ho_2: Family responsibility has no significant positive influence on employee career advancement in quick service restaurants, South East, Nigeria.

Ho_3: Societal expectation has no significant positive influence on employee career advancement in quick service restaurants, South East, Nigeria.

Table 4.3.1 Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.619[a]	.383	.378	.64336	.383	68.365	3	330	.000	1.531

a. Predictors: (Constant), SOEX, POS, FR

b. Dependent Variable: CADEV

Based on the model summary, the regression analysis shows that the combination of perceived organizational support (POS), family responsibility (FR), and societal

expectation (SOEX) significantly predicts employee career advancement (CADEV) in quick service restaurants in Southeast Nigeria. The model produced an R Square value of 0.383, indicating that approximately 38.3% of the variation in employee career advancement can be explained by the three predictors. The overall model is statistically significant, with a significance value (Sig. F Change) of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 threshold, confirming that the regression model as a whole fits the data well.

The result from the overall model indicates that the predictors, including perceived organizational support, significantly explain variations in employee career advancement. This suggests that perceived organizational support likely contributes to the model's predictive power. Although the model summary alone does not provide the individual p-value for perceived organizational support, the significance of the full model implies that perceived organizational support may indeed play a significant role. Therefore, pending confirmation from the coefficients table, the null hypothesis H_{01} can be tentatively rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis H_{11}, which posits a significant positive relationship between perceived organizational support and employee career advancement.

The overall regression model suggests that family responsibility, along with the other predictors, significantly contributes to the explanation of career advancement outcomes. This indicates that family responsibility may have a meaningful influence on career advancement in the context of quick service restaurants. Consequently, based on the significance of the full model, there is preliminary evidence to reject the null hypothesis H_{02} and accept the alternative hypothesis H_{12}, which asserts that family responsibility has a significant positive relationship with employee career advancement.

The statistically significant regression model that includes societal expectation as one of the predictors suggests that societal expectations may have an influence on employee career advancement as well. Given the strength and significance of the overall model, there is reasonable justification to reject H_{03} and accept the alternative hypothesis H_{13}, which affirms a significant positive relationship between societal expectation and employee career advancement. The regression model indicates that perceived organizational support, family responsibility, and societal expectation collectively and significantly influences employee career advancement in quick service restaurants in Southeast Nigeria. However, to draw firm conclusions about the significance of each individual predictor, it is essential to examine the coefficients table for their specific p-values.

Table 4.3.2 ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	84.891	3	28.297	68.365	.000[b]
	Residual	136.590	330	.414		

Total	221.481	333			

a. Dependent Variable: CADEV

b. Predictors: (Constant), SOEX, POS, FR

The ANOVA table shows a significance value (Sig.) of .000**,** which is less than the conventional threshold of 0.05**.** This indicates that the regression model is statistically significant, meaning that, collectively, the independent variables (POS, FR, SOEX) have a significant effect on the dependent variable (employee career advancement). The F-statistic is 68.365**,** which also supports the conclusion that the model as a whole fits the data well.

The null hypothesis states that *perceived organizational support has no significant positive relationship with employee career advancement in quick service restaurants in Southeast Nigeria*. However, the significance of the overall regression model (p = .000) suggests that at least one of the predictors—potentially including perceived organizational support—significantly explains variance in career advancement. Therefore, based on this result, we have sufficient statistical grounds to reject the null hypothesis (H_{01}) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_{11})**,** which asserts that *perceived organizational support has a significant positive relationship with employee career advancement*. This conclusion, however, is tentative until we examine the individual significance (p-value) of POS in the coefficients table.

This null hypothesis claims that *family responsibility has no significant positive relationship with employee career advancement*. Since the regression model as a whole is statistically significant, it is reasonable to conclude that family responsibility may contribute to the prediction of career advancement. As such, we are justified in rejecting the null hypothesis (H_{02}) and accepting the alternative hypothesis (H_{12}), which states that *family responsibility has a significant positive relationship with employee career advancement*. Again, the precise strength of this relationship would be confirmed in the coefficients table.

This hypothesis suggests that *societal expectation has no significant positive relationship with employee career advancement*. The overall significance of the regression model (Sig. = .000) indicates that the set of predictors, which includes societal expectation, contributes meaningfully to predicting career advancement. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) can be rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_{13}), which claims that societal expectation has a significant positive relationship with employee career advancement*,* can be accepted, pending confirmation of SOEX's individual significance in the coefficients output.

Table 4.3.3 Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B

		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	1.176	.264		4.454	.000	.657	1.696
	POS	.258	.070	.228	3.701	.000	.121	.395
	FR	.454	.067	.419	6.735	.000	.322	.587
	SOEX	.052	.067	.038	.780	.436	-.080	.184

a. Dependent Variable: CADEV

Based on the Coefficients table from regression analysis, we can now interpret the significance of each predictor (POS, FR, and SOEX) in relation to the dependent variable (employee career advancement – CADEV). This allows us to assess each hypothesis individually and determine whether to accept or reject the null hypotheses.

Hypothesis One (H_{01}): *Perceived organizational support has no significant effect on employee career advancement in quick service restaurants, South-east Nigeria.* From the coefficients table, the p-value for perceived organizational support (POS) is .000, which is less than the standard significance level of 0.05. This indicates that POS is a statistically significant predictor of employee career advancement. The unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.258) is positive, meaning that as perceived organizational support increases, employee career advancement also increases. Conclusion for H_{01}: The null hypothesis is rejected. There is sufficient evidence to accept the alternative hypothesis (H_{11}) that perceived organizational support has a significant positive relationship with employee career advancement.

Hypothesis Two (H_{02}): *Family responsibility has no significant effect on employee career advancement in quick service restaurants South-east,Nigeria.* The p-value for family responsibility (FR) is also .000, which is highly significant. The unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.454) is positive, indicating that as family responsibilities are better managed or supported, there is a corresponding increase in employee career advancement. Conclusion for H_{02}: The null hypothesis is rejected. The alternative hypothesis (H_{12}) is accepted, confirming that family responsibility has a significant positive relationship with employee career advancement.

Hypothesis Three (H_{03}): *Societal expectation has no significant effect on employee career advancement in quick service restaurant, South-east Nigeria.*

For societal expectation (SOEX), the p-value is .436, which is greater than 0.05. This means that the variable is not statistically significant in predicting career advancement. Additionally, the unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.052) is small and close to zero, with a 95% confidence interval that crosses zero (Lower Bound = -0.080, Upper Bound = 0.184), further confirming the lack of significance. Conclusion for H_{03}: The null hypothesis is accepted. There is no sufficient evidence to support a significant positive relationship between societal expectation and employee career advancement.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Ho_1: Perceived organizational support has no significant effect on employee career advancement in quick service restaurants, South East, Nigeria.

The regression analysis reveals that perceived organizational support had a statistically significant effect on employee career advancement (B = 0.258, p = 0.000). This indicates that employees who perceive their organizations as supportive are more likely to experience meaningful progress in their careers. This finding aligns with the implications of earlier empirical works. For instance, while Adams and Yusuf (2020), Eze and Chukwu (2021), and Olaniyan and Adeoye (2023) mainly explored work-life balance and turnover, Eze and Chukwu (2021) highlighted that structured career development an aspect of organizational support improves work-life harmony and reduces turnover. Similarly, Chukwu and Obi (2022) affirmed that creating enabling environments for career advancement contributes positively to work-life balance, indirectly underscoring the role of perceived support. Therefore, the results of this study confirm the importance of a supportive organizational environment as a key driver of employee career development.

Ho_2 Family responsibility has no significant effect on employee career advancement in quick service restaurants, South East, Nigeria.

The results showed that family responsibility was significantly and effect on employee career advancement (B = 0.454, p = 0.000). This suggests that when organizations recognize and accommodate employees' family responsibilities, it can positively influence career outcomes, possibly by fostering work-life integration and reducing stress. This finding expands on prior literature. Adams and Yusuf (2020) reported that unmanaged family responsibilities led to poor work-life balance and increased employee turnover. In contrast, this study implies that when these responsibilities are acknowledged and supported, the result is more favorable career growth. Olaniyan and Adeoye (2023) also found that family obligations predict work-life conflict, but recommended supportive workplace strategies such as flexible work schedules. Hence, the present finding offers a more optimistic perspective, highlighting the benefits of integrating family-friendly practices into workplace planning.

Ho_3: Societal expectation has no significant effect on employee career advancement in quick service restaurants, South East, Nigeria.

Societal expectation was found to have a positive but non-significant relationship with employee career advancement (B = 0.052, p = 0.436). This indicates that societal norms and external pressures, such as traditional gender roles or cultural expectations, may not have a direct influence on career growth within the context of quick service restaurants in Southeast Nigeria. This aspect is not extensively addressed in the reviewed studies, as most focused on organizational or structural variables. For example, Chukwu and Obi (2022) and Eze and Chukwu (2021) emphasized the importance of internal company support systems, while Olaniyan and Adeoye (2023) concentrated on family dynamics rather than broader societal influences. The finding in this study suggests that in operationally intensive sectors like quick service restaurants, career advancement is driven more by internal organizational mechanisms than by external societal norms.

Summary of Findings

This study investigated the relationship between work-life harmony variables and employee career advancement in quick

service restaurants in Southeast Nigeria, the findings are:

i. Perceived Organizational Support was found to have a significant effect on employee career advancement (B = 0.258, p = .000). This implies that employees who feel supported by their organizations are more likely to advance in their careers.
ii. Family Responsibility showed a strong positive and significant effect on career advancement (B = 0.454, p = .000), indicating that employees who can manage their family responsibilities effectively are more likely to progress in their careers.
iii. Societal Expectation however, did not have a statistically significant effect on career advancement (B = 0.052, p = .436), suggesting that external social pressures or norms do not significantly influence career outcomes within the sampled quick service restaurants.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that elements of work-life harmony play critical roles in shaping career trajectories of employees in quick service restaurants, Southeast Nigeria. Specifically: Organizational support and effective management of family responsibilities significantly promote career advancement. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

i. Quick service restaurants should adopt mentorship programs, open communication channels, and employee recognition initiatives to strengthen organizational support.
ii. Quick service restaurants should provide child-care support, family leave, and counseling services to help employees manage family obligations effectively.
iii. Quick service restaurants should provide Regular health checks, mental health days, and wellness programs should be institutionalized to foster well-being.

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