Role of workplace support on relationship between perceived work life balance policies and flourishing among military personnel

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ABSTRACT

Our study investigated role of workplace support on the relationship between perceived work life balance policies and flourishing among Nigerian military personnel. Participants were one hundred and ninety-three (193) men from the Nigerian army, with age range from 18 - 55 years (Mean age = 37.5 years, *SD* = 4.61). They completed the self-report measures of the variables in the study. Data was analyzed using Hayes regressions-based PROCESS module. Results of the analysis showed that perceived work life balance policies was not significantly associated with flourishing. Workplace support was not significantly associated with flourishing. The relationship between perceived work life balance and flourishing was moderated by workplace support such that workplace support strengthens the positive relationship between perceived work life balance policies and flourishing. The findings suggest that the interaction of perceived work life balance policies and workplace support cultures are critical in understanding Nigerian army personnel's flourishing. Workplace interventions that will help improve workplace support for soldiers to flourish even as they face the challenges of ethno-political conflicts in the Nigeria are suggested. The study addresses the need for future research on the internal structure of the defense community and how Nigerian soldiers will flourish amidst insecurity challenges facing the country.

Introduction

Nigeria is a heterogeneous and multi-ethnic state beset by numerous cleavages and centrifugal tendencies that has made her witness several violent conflicts and death from fourth republic in 1999 to date which has reduced the mental health of their soldiers and citizens (Mbah, 2014). These conflicts include farmer-herder clashes, Boko Haram terrorism, ethnic crisis in Plateau state, religious crisis in Kaduna state, killings of Shiite protesters in Abuja, rural banditry in North West Nigeria, violent armed robbery across the country, kidnappings, state violence, and the separatist movement of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). The reality of these contemporary conflicts and related violent crisis is connected to increased changes in workplace support and perceived work life balance policies which may have affected the flourishing these soldiers and the mental health of Nigerian security forces (Baba, Ujoatuonu, Ogba, & Kanu, 2019). It is believed that these conflicts become very intractable leading to military involvement in the insecurity challenges faced by the country (Omede, 2012).

Flourishing is a radical new way of understanding happiness and well-being amidst insecurity, challenges and conflict (Bowling, Alarcon, Bragg, & Hartman, 2015); which could help to promote the connection with other broader social economic world, resulting in soldiers' satisfaction and accomplishment in their family, world of work and country at large (Bono, Davies, & Rasch, 2012). Rautenbach (2015) defined flourishing as having soaring levels of both hedonic (subjective or emotional wellbeing, e.g., life-satisfaction and a positive–negative affect balance and happiness) and eudaimonic well-being (psychological and social well-being, e.g., meaning, engagement, purpose in life, positive relations and personal growth. Rothmann (2013) found that flourishing in military organizational contexts and flourishing in general life share around 54% of variance. Flourishing soldiers have excellent mental with physical health and are more resilient to vulnerabilities and challenges in life than non-flourishers. In the same vein, Rothman (2013) conceptualized flourishing as emotional, psychological and social well-being of individuals. Wezlak-Bialowolska, McNeely and VanderWeele (2017) described flourishing soldiers' as personnel with high levels of emotional, social and psychological well-being. Moreover, Rothman (2014) found that the opposite of flourishing is languishing, and those soldiers' who are neither flourishing nor languishing are defined as having moderate mental health.

Previous researchers (e.g., Weerarative, 2015; Wezlak-Bialowolska, McNeely, VanderWeele, & Topa, 2019) have found that soldiers flourishing can be nurtured, developed and facilitated by understanding and supporting them in work, family and organizational contexts. Bono, Davies and Rasch (2012) reported that flourishing in the military organizational context (compared to flourishing in general life) was predicted by work control and load, type of personality, grit, team quality

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and organizational factors, which may be better predictors of organizational outcomes. Because arrays of factors play a vital role in flourishing in the military work and organizational context (Weerarative, 2015), perceived work life balance policy is one of the factors advanced in this study to be associated with flourishing.

A policy can be private or public. However, this paper views policy from the public perspective. Policy refers to the actions of organizations and government directed at achieving certain goals. Adamolekun (1983) defined policy as a course setting involving decisions of widest ramifications and longest-term perspective in the life of an organization but which are more involving than ordinary decisions. Perceived work–life balance policy, programs and practices is used to describe organizational initiatives voluntarily introduced by organizations to facilitate the reconciliation of employees work and personal lives (Grady, McCarthy, & Darcy, 2010) and enhance experience of work and non-work domains (Hudson, 2005). Grady, McCarthy, Darcy and Kirrane (2008) defined work–life balance policies as any employer sponsored benefits or working conditions that help employees balance work and non-work demands. The needs and priorities of soldiers in the same base and war front are not identical and may therefore vary in application between soldiers' behaviour in accordance with changing circumstances. Work-life balance policies are not static (Darcy et al, 2012). Changes occur at different socio-economic political times, organizational structure, and leadership conditions depending on circumstances in the country which may change suddenly or gradually from day to day (Salaam, 2012).

Moreover, work-life balance policy need not necessarily be balanced equally. The number of hours devoted to work and to personal activities need not be equal and may thus change according to circumstances required. Parris, Vickers and Wilkes (2008) stated that, a true balance between work and life comes with knowing that your work-life activities are integrated and planned not separated. In the course of instituting policies and programs. Work life balance policies when effectively implemented results in reduced strain experienced by soldiers' (Osorio, Aguado, & Villar, 2014; Parris, Vickers, & Wilkes, 2008), the reverse has been the case in Nigeria (Weeraratne, 2015). Some researchers (Hsieh 2005; Kinnunen & Mauno 2007; Rajadhyaksha & Ramadoss, 2010; Wesley & Muthuswamy 2005) have investigated perceived work life balance policies among employees in various settings to identify the direction of spillovers and found that perceived work life balance influences the wellbeing of employees in those settings. Also, work life balance policies have always been found positive towards job satisfaction, flourishing, unprecedented organizational growth by creating adaptability, longevity and office organizational performance (Hsieh, 2005). Wesley and Muthuswamy (2005) stated that many soldiers leave the organization due to laxity of work life balance policies, workplace support from the management, poor dealing with employees' welfare, style of leadership and executives which has effect on their flourishing and wellbeing. Therefore, the relationship between perceived work life balance policies and flourishing is proposed to have a moderating variable (workplace support) in this article.

In the current study workplace support was considered in terms of coworker and supervisor support, expectations and behaviours. It is basically a type of motivation and performance reward which are closely related to work life balance policies of the organization (Denis & Minnotte, 2017) and used to enhance performance and commitment of employees towards achieving organizational goals and objectives (Rautenbach, 2015). Workplace support can be informal (e.g., not traditionally planned, evolve out of workplace activities and routines, occur in a random/ad hoc basics) or formal (e.g., sponsored programs or assistance and systematically developed and accessed, Pidd, 2004). In investigating the relationship between work place support and well-being researchers have found that having a supportive work place is related to lower levels of stress (Denis & Minnotte, 2017) and increased well being (Greenglass, Pantony, & Burke, 1989). Researchers have also noted that a supportive workplace culture in organizations may be an important variable in perceived work life balance policies (Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg, & Kalleberg, 2005; Aishutwi, 2017). A supportive workplace in the military environment means that the organization's overall structure is sensitive to soldiers' personal life; family needs and does not demand the prioritization of work over personal life and families. This possibility may not be the case with Nigerian soldiers (Akinola, 2015; Bappah, 2016). Mennino, Rubin, and Brayfield (2005) in an analysis of the 1997 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW) found that supportive workplace reduced negative spillover, and increased work life balance.

This paper is anchored on social identity theory propounded by Tajfel and Turner (1985) which provides insight on how individuals relate to others in a pluralist society like Nigeria. Social identity theory argued that (a) social identification is a perception of oneness with a group of persons; (b) social identification stems from the categorization of individuals, the distinctiveness and prestige of the group, the salience of out-groups, and the factors that traditionally are associated with group formation; and (c) social identification leads to activities that are congruent with the identity, support for institutions that embody the identity, stereotypical perceptions of self and others, and outcomes that traditionally are associated with group formation, and it reinforces the antecedents of identification. This perspective is applied to organizational socialization, flourishing, role conflict, perceived work life balance policy, workplace support and intergroup relations. Social categories such as family, gender, religion, ethnicity and occupation are internalized as a potentially important part of the personnel's self-concept that provide meaningful and significant self–references through which soldiers perceive themselves and the world around them (Bar-Tal, 1998). Social identities and self-categories are social comparative and reality-based representations of one and others (Turner, 1999). Identifying with workplace groups and categories provides soldiers with a source of self-esteem and positive self-identity in combat and warfare (Turner, 1999). In return, soldiers will be motivated to comply with group normative attitudes and behaviors' in order to retain their valued membership, win combats and warfare's.

Social identity theory has provided important insights into the influence of the workplace context on employees' behavior and attitudes (Haslam, 2001). Workplace support and flourishing soldiers identify with groups within the workplace has been linked with work life balance (Veenstra & Haslam, 2000), motivation (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000), and negative turnover intentions (Abrams et al., 1998). Furthermore, research on social identity and the workplace support indicates that the workplace support context involves multiple workplace identities such as organizational identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and work group identity (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). From a social identity perspective, perceived work life balance policies on flourishing and workplace support of soldiers will influence not only the extent the soldiers identify with the organization, and/or work group, but also their personal well-being and functioning. The availability of work life balance policies is particularly important for soldiers with because these workers have both family responsibilities and work demands. There is little research on perceived work life balance policies in relation to flourishing among military personnel; and we could not see a previous study which has investigated role of workplace support on relationship between work life balance policies and flourishing.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses for this study are as follows:

1. Perceived work family balance policies will be significantly associated with flourishing among Nigerian army personnel.

2. Workplace support will be significantly associated with flourishing among Nigerian army personnel.

3. The relationship between perceived work life balance policies and flourishing will be stronger for those who have low workplace support compared to those who have high workplace support.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants in this study were 193 Nigerian soldiers drawn from 8 departments The departments were: Nigerian Army Amour Corps (22), Nigerian Army Chaplain (12) Nigerian Army Corps of Artillery (54), Nigerian Army Medical Corps (5), Nigerian Army Signals (15), Nigerian Army Supply and Transport (19), Nigerian Army Engineers (65). They were drawn from Nigerian Army School of Military Engineering (NASME) Barracks Markudi, and 23 Amour Brigade, Yola. Participants' age range was 18 - 55 years with a mean age of 36.5 years (SD = 4.61). They were all men. Bbased on their marital status, 160 were single and 110 married. Respondents completed the questionnaire in their offices and duty posts. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and all the participants volunteered to participate in the study. A total of 210 copies of the questionnaires were administered, and 201 copies were completed and returned, but 193 were properly completed and scored for data analysis.

Instruments

Participants completed a questionnaire that contained measures of demographic characteristics, Perceived work life balance policy, flourishing, and workplace support.

Perceived Work Life Balance Policy Scale (PWLBPS)

Perceived work life balance policy Scale is a 9-item questionnaire, developed by Swarnalatha (2013) to measure perceived work life balance policy. Each item in this measure is rated on a five-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree; 3 = neutral; 1 = strongly disagree). Examples of items in the scale are: In my organization specific work life balance policy has been established and documented; Work life balance policies implemented in the organization make my job easier, etc. The items of Perceived Work-life Balance Policy Scale in the present study, loaded on a single factor with values of .64 to .89. The single dimension explained 62.19% of the variance in the Scale. The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha, α) was .81.

Flourishing Scale (FS)

The 8-item Flourishing Scale was developed by Diener, Wirtz, Tov, Kim-Prieto, Choi, Oishi and Biswas-Diener, (2009) to assess subjective well-being and individually perceived social-psychological prosperity. The scale consists of eight items (α = .92) which describe essential aspects of human functioning about individual fulfillment or self-actualization. Several aspects of life, like personal relations, self-esteem, aims in life, and the degree of optimism are taken as a basis for this measure. Participants are requested to answer on a 7-point scale to what extent they agree (7) or disagree (1) with each presented statement. Sample item include: I am optimistic about my future; I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others, etc. The total score is calculated by adding up the scores the participants assigned to the single items. Thus, the range of the total score ranges from 8 (worst state of positive mental health) to 56 (best state of positive mental health). High scores suggest a positive self-perception of the respondent, regarding positive psychological functioning across diverse domains that are covered. Diener et al. (2010) certified both good psychometric properties of this scale and a high reliability. The Flourishing Scale in the present study was tested for factorial validity. All the items loaded on a single factor with values of .47 to .93. The single dimension explained 64.58% of the variance in the scale. The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha, α) of the Flourishing Scale was .92.

Workplace Support Scale (WPSS)

Workplace Support Scale was developed by Swarnalatha (2013) to measure workplace support of employees. The instrument is a 12-item questionnaire that is scored on a five-point likert rating format (1= Strongly agree, 3 = Neutral, and 5 = Strongly disagree), so that low scores indicate low levels of support, while high scores indicated high levels of support. Sample items include: My subordinates assist me for successfully completing my work; I get high degree of respect and fair treatment from my boss; my superior gives more importance towards the well-being of the employees etc. The twelve items were combined to give a total score for workplace support. The Workplace Support Scale in the present study was tested for factorial validity. All the items loaded on a single factor with values of .59 to .78. The single dimension explained 53.13% of the variance in the Scale. The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha, α) of the Scale was .92.

Design/Statistics

This was a survey research and cross-sectional design was adopted in the study. Pearson's correlation (r) analysis was conducted among the study's demographic variables, predictors and dependent variables while the PROCESS Macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013, 2014) was applied for testing the hypotheses. In the correlations, relevant demographic variables were included in the analysis. The essence of the correlation was to determine the demographic variables that may significantly correlate with flourishing so that they will be included in the PROCESS module as covariates (i.e., control variables) in order to partial out their effects. Instead of ordinary regression analysis, the PROCESS module is currently applied in tests of moderation analysis in organizational psychology and management sciences research (e.g., Brienza & Bobocel, 2017), due to its superior value and ease of use.

Results

The descriptive statistics and correlations of the demographic variables and study variables are shown in Table 1. The Hayes PROCESS Macro for SPSS results for testing the hypotheses is in Table 2. Slopes of moderation (interaction graphs) is shown in Figure 1.

In Table 1, older workers were found to have spent a greater number of years in army service had larger family size and had higher levels of education. Age did not correlate significantly with the independent and dependent variables. Number of years in army service was positively related to family size and educational status. Number of years in army service did not correlate significantly with the independent and dependent variables. Larger family size was associated with higher levels of education, and lower perceived work-life balance policies. Perceived work-life balance policies was posi.tively related to workplace support, indicating that those with more workplace support had positive perceptions of work-life balance policies

Results of the PROCESS module in Table 2 showed that perceived work-life balance policies was not significantly associated with flourishing (B = -.23, t = -1.86). Workplace support was not significantly associated with flourishing (B =

-.14, *t* = -1.44). The interaction of PWLBP and workplace support in relation to flourishing was positive and significant (*B* = .05, *t* = 5.50, *p*>.001), which means that workplace support moderated the relationship between PWLBP and flourishing among personnel of the Nigerian militaty. Simple slopes analysis for probing the interaction (see Figure 1), showed that for those with low workplace support, there was a negative relationship between PWLBP and flourishing (B = -.79, *t* =

-4.34, *p* = .000, 95%*CI* = -1.14, -.43). At moderate workplace support, PWLBP was not associated with flourishing (B = -.23, *t* = -1.86, *p* = .065, 95%*CI* = -.48, .01), but for Nigerian army personnel who had high workplace support, PWLBP was positively associated with flourishing (*B* = .32, *t* = 2.36, *p* = .019, *CI* = .05, .59). All the variables in the model explained 11% of the variance in flourishing (*R*^{2} = .11).

Table 1: Pair-wise correlations of demographic and study variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Age	-					
2 Year of service	.56***	-				
3 Family size	.47***	.54***	-			
4 Education	.52***	.37***	.35***	-		
5 PWLBP	-.07	-.13	-.17**	-.04	-	
6 Workplace Support	.06	-.09	-.05	-.02	.57***	-
7 Flourishing	-.11	.05	.09	-.13	-.03	-.04

Note. ***p<.001; **p<.01; For Education: 0 = O'Level/SSCE, 1 = OND/NCE, 2 = HND/BSc, 3 = MSc/PhD; PWLB = Perceived Work-life Balance Policies.

Table 2: Hayes' PROCESS Macro results predicting flourishing from perceived work-life balance policies and workplace support among Nigerian army personnel

Predictors	Coefficient	*SE*	*t*	*p*	95% *CI*
PWLBP	-.23	.13	-1.86	.153	[-.45, .01]
Workplace support (WS)	-.14	.10	-1.44	.065	[-.33, .05]
PWLB x WS	.05	.01	5.50	.000	[.03, .07]

Note. (a) Total *R*^{2} = .11, *F*(3, 189) = 11.13, *p* < .001; PWLBP = Perceived Work-life Balance Policies
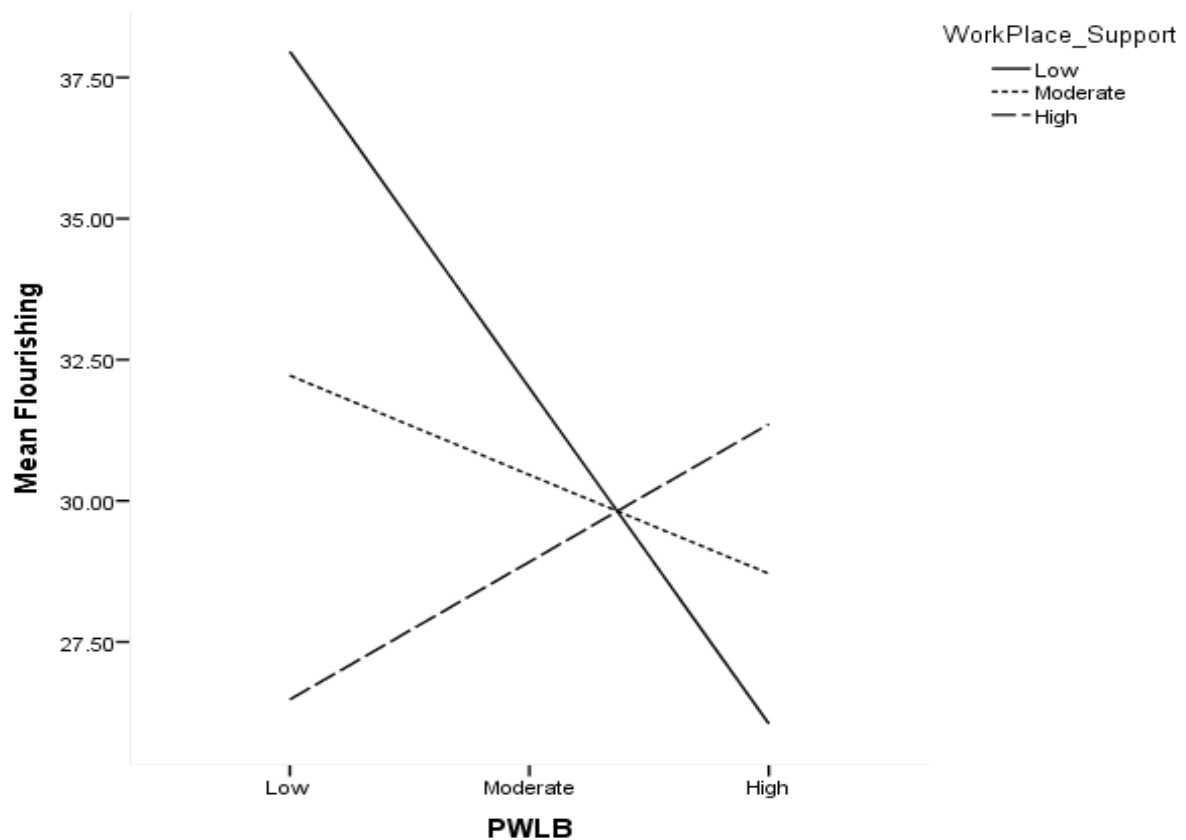

Figure 1: Slope of moderating effect of workplace support on perceived work-life balance policies and flourishing. PWLB= Perceived Work Life Balance Policies.

Discussion

This study investigated the insecurity and facets of militarism and moderating role of workplace support on the relationship between perceived work life balance policies and flourishing among Nigerian army personnel. The first hypothesis which stated that perceived work life balance policy will significantly predict flourishing was not supported by the finding of this study. Results of the study showed that a perceived work life balance policy was not significantly associated with flourishing. This implies that the level of perceived work life balance policies of the participant's organizations did not positively or negatively influence their flourishing. Although, the finding is surprising and contradicts the findings of other researchers (e.g., Hsieh 2005; Kinnunen & Mauno 2007; Osorio, Aguado, & Villar, 2014; Parris, Vickers, & Wilkes, 2008; Rajadhyaksha & Ramadoss 2010; Veiga, Baldridge, & Eddleston, 2004; Wesley & Muthuswamy 2005) where perceived work life balance policies predicted flourishing (psychological wellbeing), it is not surprising with the present situation the military personnel's have found themselves. Such findings may be understood to be attributable to the dynamic nature of human behaviour, politics, resources and society.

While, human beings have the tendency to seek policies that are farfetched from the one offered by organizations to assist personnel manage the demands of work and personal life, ethnocentrism in Nigerian politics, personnel recruitment, nepotism and political party and superiority mentality has affected the military organization. When government and organisations create enabling environment for soldiers to manage work and personal life, it may pave way for soldiers to make effort on work and flourish in their work organization. When organizations institute friendly policies to help them flourish, some other soldiers may wish to reciprocate by being eager to flourish while others will not. A more plausible explanation is that perceived work life balance policies in the military is not static and does not directly influence soldiers' flourishing but does so indirectly by interacting with other variables. Indeed, this appears to be the case, in this study, as whether soldiers may flourish may depend on the nature of the modifying/ combined/interactive influence with other variables. It is capable of changes at different times, organizational structure, and leadership, economic, political and social conditions and depending on circumstances in life which may change suddenly or gradually from day to day.

The second hypothesis which stated that workplace support will be significantly associated with flourishing among Nigerian army personnel was not supported by the finding in this study. The result showed that workplace support was not significantly associated with flourishing. This implies that workplace support of Nigerian army personnel is not linked with flourishing. The result of this finding is not consistent with the findings of any researchers, who found that workplace support was a significant predictor of flourishing (e.g. Fernandez 1985; Galinsky & Stein 1990; Greenglass, Pantony, & Burke, 1989; Mennino, Rubin & Brayfield 2005).

Finally, the third hypothesis which stated workplace support will moderate the relationship between perceived work place balance policies and flourishing was supported by the finding of this study. This hypothesis was supported. Workplace support moderated the relationship between PWLBP and flourishing among personnel of the Nigerian militaty Thus, those that perceived work life balance policies more tend to flourish when they have high workplace support. In consistency with the buffering model of social support (Turner, 1999), and other related empirical studies (e.g., Osumah, 2013; Iyekekpolo, 2016), work place support may be considered a potent factor that may make the difference if properly instituted in the impact of perceived work life balance policies on flourishing. This is the most important finding in this study.

Implications of the Findings

The present findings have implications for flourishing in the military environment during or outside warfare. The defense organizations need to realize the importance of helping soldiers' flourish by instituting workplace support and work life balance policies that will help soldiers flourish. When soldiers perceive positive work life balance policies in both the distribution of resources, the work place support treatment they are given by their supervisors and being consulted in decision making process during organizational change, warfare/combat, they will give extra dose of their time, efforts and commitment which will aid them flourish and enhance performance.

Also, the current papers suggested that by developing work life balance policies to make defense organizations to know the impact of workplace support that will help their soldiers to flourish, soldiers flourishing can be enhanced. This enhancement will in turn help the soldiers to actualize organizational and personal goals that gave rise to organizational development and flourishing. The type of work life balance policies that exists may be important, but its effect may be enhanced or hampered by the prevailing atmosphere of workplace support received by soldiers. Workplace support in the military environment will help soldiers in enhancing their ability to flourish, balance work, uncertainties and family responsibilities to flourish. From the result and findings, the researcher has attempted to provide explanation to the flourishing phenomenon especially within the Nigerian context. Furthermore, fostering flourishing through work life balance policies and increased work place support is a highly viable organizational goal because of their impact on important organizational outcomes. It is, therefore, understood that by developing a positive climate of work life balance policies within the military organization, and by providing workplace support environment that fosters well being; military organizational leaders can increase flourishing of soldiers', which will lead to other positive organisational outcomes.

Limitations of the Study and suggestions for further study

The study has made some contributions to knowledge, but it is not without some limitations. First the cross-sectional survey design limits the possibility of causal explanations. It is only through longitudinal studies that causality can be established. Second, all the participants in the current study were males sampled from the Nigerian army personnel and the sample size was not very large. This may have hindered the variability in perceived work life balance policies and workplace support. In future, Nigerian armed forces male and female soldiers need to be sampled. Thirdly, due to social desirability bias, participants may have answered the questions in the direction perceived as "fair". However, the anonymity ensured and the assurance that participants' responses would be used for academic purposes only may have diminished this risk. Thus, the findings should be generalised with caution across other regions and occupations, because, study represents only a preliminary step in flourishing in the Nigerian context. It is expected that other researchers will continue this important line of inquiry and expand the frontiers of knowledge by considering other relevant predictor variables such as faith, spirit and energy at work, basic need satisfaction at work, organizational commitment, work method control, human development programs of organizations, quantitative workload and personality traits in future research.

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