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**More to Work than Money: Harnessing Work-Life
Balance in Traditional Occupations through Psychosocial
and Cultural Functions of Work**

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More to Work than Money: Harnessing Work-Life Balance in Traditional Occupations through Psychosocial and Cultural Functions of Work

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Abstract

Purpose: The study argues that work itself appears muscular and economic but the soft meaning ascribed to work has implications on work-life balance, and people management particularly in traditional occupations. It further asserts that excessive valuation of the economic dimension of work has deprived work of intrinsic values, which naturally undermines decent work and work-life balance as well as the meaningfulness of work. Although many conceptualizations have tied work to economic functions of paid work, the current reflection transcends to meaning-making through analysis of psychosocial and cultural significance of work and how these values could be purposefully integrated in promoting the values of work-life balance and wellbeing through people management practices in-context.

Material and methods: The materials used in the study were documents derived for secondary sources in the context of interest. The study deployed content analysis that is a flexible research method and has been used widely in the social sciences and human resource management. It was used to classify content in thematic forms and analysis meaningfulness and work functions in a systematic, rigorous approach through the use of documents obtained and information generated through observation in the course of the study.

Findings: From the analysis, it was observed that the drive towards decent work has ignited critical debates on work-life balance, and scaling economic interest and workplace happiness factors is becoming a great challenge to decent work demand in work life as a whole. Despite the economic value, satisfying

orienting aspects of work and pleasure are drawn from the psychological, social and cultural functions of work in the traditional sector. It further unveiled that the nature of work in traditional occupations advocates existential harmony between work and life, although with interferences from modern work values. With particular focus on traditional occupations in Cameroon, the paper persists that the significance of work in indigenous survival economy unveils invaluable mental, affective and cultural gains, which are capable of bridging between work life and subjective wellbeing.

Implication to Theory, Practice and Policy: Nevertheless, the paper does not argue against pay as a whole, but emphasizes that meaningfulness in nonpaid work is often undermined in economic-oriented discourses, theories and practices. While the present analysis recognizes the criticality of imported models in people management at work, it reiterates that work in pre-colonial Africa was life, and life was work and did not exclude management practices. While recognizing the perception of work as modern and economic driven, the paper advocates the intrinsic benefits of work in traditional occupations that are synonymous to lifestyle and their integration into mainstream people management practices. Critical lessons are drawn with implications to human resources policy, theory building with indigenous inputs and contingent practices in both modern and traditional sectors.

Keywords: *Work, Money, Culture, Psychosocial-Benefits, Work-Life-Balance, Subjective-Wellbeing, Traditional Occupations*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In certain economic and management debates, wellbeing at work has been perceived as a means to performance and productivity, and not an end in itself, thereby positioning work as a drive for monetary reward. This is prevalent in both traditional and modern conceptions where the notion of work is very critical and concerns all imaginable human activities designed to satisfy human needs (Akpala, 1984; Rosso, Dekas, and Wrzesniewski, 2010). This depicts the elasticity of work and meanings ascribed to it in different cultural contexts particularly with traditional occupations. Traditional occupations involves traditional work activities mostly in agriculture and crafts with building inclusive in the building of traditional economies and attention is drawn to the implications of these activities to work-life balance (Ratnam, 2011). The one thing needful is that meaningful work is viewed as a way to bring harmony, if not balance, to the busy lives of workers providing them with well-being and enhanced performance and dedication (Steger, 2017). This view has also been reiterated by Aju, Orugun and Hamosi (2013) that work instinct is associated with pleasure that provides opportunities for individuals to achieve something, exercise one's imagination and intelligence, change personality, to know oneself, meet other people, help them and feel competent and powerful in life.

It would be recalled that before the advent of modern work and organisations in Africa, work and occupations took a purely traditional form as indigenous socio-cultural activities designed for subsistence and survival purposes. Although work has become one of the most challenging issues to individuals, families and societies, it serves multiple functions in terms of life satisfaction. This is consistent with the view of Steger (2017) that work is harmonious with meaning and purpose in the worker's life as a whole, and helps workers to build more meanings in their lives. Following the desire of many persons to render work meaningful, more individuals desire to their work to be meaningful, rather than just a source of income and it has recognized by many organizations that fostering meaningful work is crucial for engaging their employees (Lysova, Allan, Dik, Duffy & Steger, 2019). With regards to traditional forms, Adebayo (2015) recounted that indigenous practices of what is termed work today has been in existence before the coming of Westerners to Africa and work has witnessed a lot of changes. In indigenous business, work culture and strategies were executed from a purely customary platform on the basis of the role it played in people and communal life. Since people are very much lured to extrinsic gains, attraction to material adaptive strategies became a cultural pattern highly expressed in many communities (Fomba, Forgako and Kinge, 2019). This has been peculiar with subsistence and existence requirements with very high desire for satisfaction in the process of carrying out work activities.

Culturally, work cuts across wellbeing, and meanings are attached to occupations in term of needs and harmonisation of core values of life with work in order to grease life course as a whole. In this respect, the meaning of work literature has become a product of a long tradition of inquiry spanning many disciplines. This is the reality despite the fact that the field lacks overarching structures that would facilitate greater integration, consistency, and understanding of this body of research (Rosso et al., 2010). The main interest and focus is on the usefulness of work, and how work is balanced with life in traditional African context as a strategy to achieve livelihood agendas and life satisfaction. Today, this has been fused with the notion of work-life balance, which is consistent with that of exchange, and where each worker receives some form of reward in exchange for services rendered, which may be intrinsic or extrinsic (Steers and Porter, 1987). In addition, emerging debates on job and life satisfaction has become an exciting area of concern since it is

locked up in work-life balance (WLB), where there is high demand for equity between work and life satisfaction in both modern and traditional sectors. This brings to the forefront the current debate on intrinsic values of work through exploration of psychosocial and cultural gains in traditional occupations in Africa.

The main question of interest today is whether there is more to work than money or whether work is just a means to an economic end. Attempting a response, Steger (2017), explained that meaningful work appeals to people's subjective experience that work is significant, harmonious and energetically synergistic with meaning and purpose in broader lives. This implies that workers through their work stand to benefit much more from work in terms of intrinsic values, and this is visible with the so called "non-work" activities in indigenous societies. In this respect, Fomba (2007) pointed out that indigenous enterprises have not reached formalized organizational development with formal structures and strategies in customary practices such as farming, community work, blacksmithing and repairs. Nevertheless, such unstructured activities in modern terms still serve many functions other than economic or financial. Consequently, work-life balance is often built on significant socio-cultural ideology, and this draws from the fact that the status of individuals in society also depends on the state of their economic life. Work settings frequently perceive employee well-being as an engine for improved performance, motivated by the idea that a happy worker is a better worker suggesting that work-related well-being delivers impressive return on investment (Steger, 2017). This is obvious, but lamentable that intrinsic gains following return in investment such as social approval, self-esteem, happiness and sense of worth are yet to be major attractions in business discourses. Although this materialistic orientation is dominant in work life principles and practices, the meaning and value that work provides to people seeks to understand the role work plays in human life and society (Steger, 2017). This reflects the essence of work in subjective wellbeing, which is inherent in African traditional occupations, and which serves a commendable level of psychosocial, spiritual and cultural functions to workers and communal life.

In the present paper, the values of work have been discussed in a variety of ways, not only in economic terms, but also within the broader context of with value systems related to different domains of life in society. Such value systems or attributions of meaning have made different categorization in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic gains and this has been captured in the present paper in terms of economic, psychosocial and cultural functions of work. The present exploration is very useful considering that some frantic attempts have been made in the domain of work psychology to draw in cultural technology to analyze the force of cultural patterning in energizing occupational behavior (Fomba et al. 2019). It argues fervently that there is more to work than money in traditional occupations, acknowledging that work plays an adaptive function, and values derived from work could be resuscitated and integrated into mainstream work practices. While upholding the economic functions of work as critical to workers and societal development, the study further examines the psychosocial and cultural functions derived from African traditional occupations, with particular reference to the Cameroon society. The present point of interest and focus is that work is inherent in human existence in the African context, and cannot be separated from existential and core values of the people. This has been in practice as a survival strategy before the advent of modern or "white man", work, which remains dominant values being perpetrated from generation to generation through existing cultural mechanisms. With precision, the paper explores the nature of traditional occupations, work functions and how extended

meanings can promote life satisfaction in survival activities in modern times. The present study employs a purely qualitative design to explore meaningfulness of work, work functions and how they relate and promote work life balance in traditional occupations.

Traditional Occupations

In the traditional sector the mission is central to the strategy of goal achievement and this implies traditional values that society ensures for survival strategy strategies through traditional occupations. To Ratnam (2011), traditional occupations are those practiced by successive generations, rooted in customs and practices and focused on subsistence economies, pre-dating colonization and the industrial revolution. Generally, local people engage in a variety of activities such as traditional farming practices, petty trading, rice cultivation, cassava production and home gardening.

This is perceived in terms of indigenous economy which is not always in terms of core financial values. Although it is evident that the traditional sectors will performance better with the practice of business principles, the distinctive features and values of traditional occupations should be advocated to promote work-life balance. To peoples Forest Programme [PFP] (2016) traditional occupations refer to livelihood/subsistence activities such as fishing/fisheries, hunting, farming and gathering of plants, fruits, nuts and mushroom. These activities are carried out by people and managing those in these activities cannot be undermined in a sector with low skill base in people management. While traditional occupation is mostly associated with the “old” and low level of education, Ratnam (2013) clarified that modernity and tradition are more complex concepts that refer to embedded values and ideologies, production technologies, knowledge systems, levels of mechanization, and integration with capitalist modes of production and marketing. This simply implies that the concepts of modern and traditional occupations are not synonymous to new and old respectively. Although work is an upshot of traditional occupations, the status and trends in the practice of traditional occupations is one of the agreed indicators to measure progress towards traditional knowledge and customary practices. In the wake of diverse reforms in the traditional sector, the focus on the human factor is critical and the management of people has been given the importance it deserves. Despite the fact that there is a conspicuous similarity and overlap in practices (PFP, 2016), people management needs a sorting out process where human resource management functions align strictly with the felt needs of the people and the workplace in order to balance their lives.

A Look at the Meaningless of Work

The concept of work was introduced in 1826 by the French mathematician Gaspard-Gustave Coriolis as "weight lifted through a height", which is based on the use of early steam engines to lift buckets of water out of flooded ore mines. Useful contributions have also come from physics, which defines work as a force, and a force is said to do work if there is a displacement of the point of application in the direction of the force. This energy-expenditure definition considers any activity that requires energy and effort as work. In generic terms, work has also been understood in terms of direct or indirect paid activity, goal-directed activity or any pleasurable or enjoyable activity. There is no doubt that work assists in the provision of basic needs and other vital functions in the society. From a broader standpoint, Aju, Orugun, & Hamosi (2013) explained that work is an activity that enables individuals fit into the world, creates networks, uses talents, learn, grow and develop identity and nurture a sense of belonging in order to adapt to the demands of the

environment. Although the term “work” is customarily used to denote the exertion of effort toward some end, it refers to activities oriented toward the production of goods and services for one’s own use or for pay particularly in economic terms. Apart from economic value, the conception of work as a means of generating income also underlies most sociological scholarship on work in different societies particularly in indigenous communities. While Fomba (2007) defined work as a goal directed human activity designed towards goal achievement and needs satisfaction, Rosso et al. (2010) conceptualized work as an end state of an activity that people desire and feel should be realized in order to have some value in the process of working.

People mostly perceive work as a money making business since working for money allows them to obtain reward and satisfy basic needs. Moreover, work can be unpaid such as family duties, household chores, schooling, voluntary activities, community services and socio-cultural ceremonies. This draws from the understanding that efforts have been exerted, time taken and distance covered in the process of realizing a given work assignment. Therefore, work is synonymous with business, occupation, employment, job, function, office, and can be said to be any activity undertaken in return for payment in money or in kind or in exchange of service (Akpala, 1984, 226). In addition, work can be full time, part time or casual, and in traditional communities, most of the paid assignments are piece rate.

It would be noted that individual differences have a lot to do with perceptions and behaviours toward work activities and processes. Consequently, work means strikingly different things to different people and the type or amount of meaning people find in their work shape their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors (Rosso et al., 2010). The meaning or significance of work is a derivative of individual subjective interpretation and collective thinking of work in relation to personal and societal values and expectations. It should be interesting to note that the capacity for work to be in harmony with and to help nurture meaning in the worker’s broader life is one level of transcendence higher than the job itself (Steger et al., 2017). This implies that the value of work results from the meanings that societies attach to work and also act as a source of meaning individuals draw from their work (Rosso et al., 2010). Therefore, unlike in modern organisations, work in the indigenous sector could be perceived as any given paid or unpaid task executed at a given time in place and driven by meaning and significance to self and community. It is therefore essential to explore the nature and work types in traditional occupations in local context to better explore meaning in the process of work-life balance.

Work as Life in Traditional Occupations

Ordinary perceptions of work hold that work is life and life is work. Indigenous communities as modern societies cherish work as an indispensable value necessary for adaptability, considering that it is the lone way to produce goods and services for sustainable livelihood. Work is generally considered to be a positive form activity that contributes to the welfare of individuals, communities and societies, and the role of traditional occupations cannot be underrated. The traditional work sector or system connotes pre-industrial or communal subsistence operations with simple technologies in a framework where one cannot separate economic interest from family or communal interest (Akpala, 1984). Small-scale business activities are generally a sole proprietorship, with many stakeholders who are usually family members and kinsmen, but with just a few paid workers bound by geographical, social and psychological factors and ensure the day-to-day running of the activities (Fomba, 2007).

This positions family members and kinsmen at the centre of occupational activities implying that they are responsible for the provision of necessary resources for any work activity. At the same time challenges arising from work processes are often managed in a purely humanistic style to maintain solidarity and cohesion between individuals as workers and individuals as family members or kinsmen. According to Thornberry (2017) indigenous peoples in Central Africa are still overwhelmingly engaged as workers in the informal economy and their traditional occupations are linked to land and natural resources or working informally for private individuals. This is justified by the fact that the communities are generally agrarian, and the exploitation of agricultural resources is no doubt a dominant activity of the people. All about work in traditional occupations revolve mainly around agriculture and the family. It is evident that as a fundamental unit of society, the place of the family as a fundamental unit of economic activities cannot be undermined (Fomba, 2007), and the realization of such economic activities depend on the expression of work behaviours.

Although indigenous peoples in the region represent specific groups whose ways of life and traditional occupations place them at the margins of society (Thornberry, 2017), there are other benefits of work ascribed to them as compared to the so called “working class” in white collar occupations. With respect to survival strategies, hunting, gathering and fishing remain by far some of the significant subsistence activities. At the same time these activities are often therapeutic and equally give them a lot of fun and satisfaction in the process realization. Indigenous peoples in Central Africa have developed highly specialized livelihood strategies adapted to the specific conditions of their territories and the practice of traditional occupations appears the most significant form of work activity (Thornberry, 2017). Cameroon as other countries in the sub-region is agrarian, and the place of small-scale agriculture including animal husbandry cannot be overemphasized in traditional occupations. This goes with the production of food crops such as cassava, yam, maize, fruits, potatoes as well as keeping of animals such as goats, pigs, cattle, fowls and rabbits. Principal products often gathered in traditional occupations by indigenous communities include honey, wild yams, mushrooms, caterpillars, koko leaves, and various other wild fruits and leaves (Thornberry, 2017).

Small-scale commerce being carried out by the people is also part of traditional occupations, and this is often observed with the sale or exchange of products, particularly in goods and services. In the traditional setting, work has been communal with no clear distinction between owners who controlled work and workers who rendered services for pay (Akpala, 1984). In terms of realizing work assignments, the men, women and children are generally involved, although work in traditional communities faces a lot of challenges. Apart from dominant farming activities and production of farm inventories, workers could be observed showcasing their natural skills in woodcraft, sculpture and commercial activities and this attracts both intrinsic and extrinsic values. An added advantage of these occupations is that they are mostly outdoor activities, and often very refreshing and stress-relieving for workers leading to the expression of positive feelings among workers. As non-monetary motivators, they are very important in the satisfaction of varying needs of those who are actively involved in different occupations in their respective communities. A systematic and in-depth exploration of gains inherent in traditional occupations stands to portray meanings or significance derived from occupational activities in the traditional sector. Unlike in the modern sector which is more organised and rigorous, workers do not have the latitude to enjoy the pleasures of outdoor activities which are therapeutic, and are always under pressure, strain and

stress. This has implications on health and performance and justify the rationale behind the functions of work in the traditional sector and work life balance that need to be creatively adopted into the mechanisms of modern work sector to inform decent work and wellbeing.

Imperative of Traditional Economic Gains

Despite the fact that the present paper reproaches the dwindling value and significance of intrinsic values of work in African context, money remains a core attraction and derivative of work, and plays important roles in individual and collective wellbeing. Financial incentive is one of the major attractions that influence people to work since workers expect their efforts to be rewarded with money (Fomba, 2007). With this recognition, financial packages have been perceived as invaluable in facilitating performance and this has implications on reward system at work. Even with traditional occupations, financial and material incentives have been recognized as critical needs, and individuals' financial circumstances at times determine meanings ascribed to work. This no doubt justifies the role of monetary compensation deployed to motivate and promote performance of workers in different contexts. This is why workers with inadequate incomes and those with great financial needs will always lay more emphasis on economic value of work. In advanced industrial societies psychological needs at times can be met only through paid work and strong emphasis is being made on the psychological importance of paid work (Gill, 1999). This is real particularly where the meaning of work is defined and obtained not from the intrinsic value of work, but through extrinsic attributes that generate satisfaction at work and in life.

Therefore, work for pay simply implies the economic and/or material functions of work to individuals in any work situation. Steger (2017) further explained that people with a job orientation focus consider work as an avenue toward financial or material compensation with little or no concern about the meaning of work. This concurs with the economic view that workers desire economic benefits, and are capable of marshalling resources and maximising rewards in all conditions (Adeboye, 2015). Although the money thesis is tenable in needs satisfaction and life adjustment, there are other intrinsic benefits required in work-life balance other than economic. This is the case with benefits from traditional occupations in African society, which suggests that traditional way of living is less materialistic even in work situations. Although cultural values that have great concern for materialism do not absolutely respond to sustainable development of mindsets and work behaviour (Fomba et al., 2019), changing perceptions of work has been observed in traditional activities, and interest is currently being shifted towards work for pay. This could be due to the fact that tendency to engage in economic activities among human beings is connected with human hedonistic principles and their inherited survival instinct (Adeboye, 2015). This no doubt expresses the need to explore other dimensions of work functions beliefs.

Mental and Emotional Derivatives

A stable mental and emotional state is indispensable in performance and productivity, which in turn produces a sound psychological state for sustainable livelihood and subjective wellbeing. The influence of work centrality to individuals has been recognized and proponents of work argue that the meaningfulness of work vary depending on the depth or strength of correlation between an individual and work Aju et al. (2013). This means that psychological gains are equally derived from work activities though they are seemingly invisible and most often remain in oblivion in work-life debates. This depicts the significance of psychological meaning of work in the present analysis, and how it affects the life of workers in community-based activities. Interest in the

centrality of work to people's life suggests that variability in the meaningfulness of work depends on the strength of the relationship between an individual and work itself (Rosso et al., 2010). From this standpoint, meaningful work scholarship seeks to optimize occupational opportunities in such a way that worker motivation, effort, and productivity are enhanced, while simultaneously enjoying greater well-being, health, and belongingness (Steger, 2017).

This is the orientation and practice in the traditional sector, and further advocates that workers constitute the alpha and omega of occupational assignments. The understanding is that work gives a personal meaning to workers, from which broader meaning is generated to affect other facets of life. Although work activities are means of subsistence, they have psychological functions to play since work gives personal meaning to participants in terms of adjustment, mental health, satisfaction and self-worth. This invariably means that human beings are pleasure seekers and instinctually alerted to any activity that connects with human survival (Adeboye, 2015). It is evident that the acquisition of survival drives has been recognized as facilitators of work motivation in all work types, and though achievement drive is a motivating factor, it also generates feelings of self-efficacy in the worker.

With regard to psychological functions, it should be noted that the amount of perceived or felt significance of work can vary greatly since a single work experience may be experienced as extremely meaningful by one individual and not very meaningful by another (Rosso et al., 2010). Therefore, individual differences set in and play a great role in meaning attributions implying that people can give different significance to the same work activities. For instance, the fulfillment of personal potential and self-realization have been perceived as very important values derived from work in different cultures and this does not exclude the traditional sector in Africa. This concurs with the view of Steers & Porter (1987) that work is a source of identity, self-esteem and self-actualization. Self-esteem for instance is important because of feelings of accomplishment from work at any level. This helps to fulfill individuals' motivations that optimistic and resilient individuals can make invaluable contributions to work and life in their communities. Since work has been perceived as an avenue for gaining a sense of achievement, mastery, status, or advancement in organizations (Steger, 2017), the traditional sector as a survival strategy cannot be excluded in fostering subjective wellbeing. Workers in indigenous settings also display a proud sense of work identity, advancement, achievement and feelings of importance in their occupations. Most often such perceptions and emotional expressions occur within the context of social self and expectations from community values.

The Social Significance of Work

It is evident that any work setting such as an organisation is a social system and comprises people who share their thinking and feelings together, whether pleasant or unpleasant. Work is a social fact because in the process of producing and delivering goods and services, people interact in groups to realize specific activities, and in the process social needs are activated and they require appropriate social responses. The only challenge is that interest in the role of socialization has been on the use of social capital to foster performance, while little has been explored on the impact of work activities on people's social relationships and wellbeing. Traditionally, the significance of WLB in employment relations tend to explore prospects that impact on employer-employee relationships such as productivity, motivation, job satisfaction and acceptable workplace morale (Akanji, 2013). This demonstrates emerging interest in the social construction of meaning in work as a source of significance to work in different sectors.

Work in indigenous community is commonly perceived as a social action since people are most often involved in groups, teams or communities. Akpala (1984,) maintained that the relationship with work in the traditional system is largely a face-to-face affair between individuals and small groups of family and community members. In the sector, social relations create conditions for the expression of work behaviours, facilitate operations of economic activities, and in return derive social gains from members as groups or communities. The interactions of individuals and relationships with other persons or groups have been recognized as a source of meaning to work with the visible role of coworkers, leaders, families, groups and communities (Rosso et al., 2010). Moreover, people with a calling orientation at work are interested in self-fulfillment, prosocial benefits, and a sense of purpose that work provides, particularly in terms of making the society a better place (Steger, 2017). It is clear that social relations in indigenous work settings do not only create conditions of work, but at the same time generate social benefits from working together and living in a mutually beneficial manner with others. This is consistent with Steers & Porter (1987) that work generally serves several social functions since the workplace provides opportunities for meeting new people and developing friendships. This reflects the communal and cohesive nature of indigenous communities loaded with social values that have been inculcated into work life, and which indirectly balances work and life in traditional occupations.

Work Life as Life Style

Culture is lifestyle and work is a way of life of a people, and used to adapt to the exigencies of their environment and to Aju et al. (2013) work is central in many cultures and it is important and significant for a lot of people as a cultural fact. Culture has been recognized as a powerful determinant of thinking and behavior in many work settings and its influence on economic behaviors and community-based economic activities cannot be disputed (Fomba, 2007). Generally, people ascribe significance to work from a culturally-induced worldview and value systems in-context. It should be understood that work plays a cultural ecology function since work is perceived as a cultural activity (Fomba et al., 2019), and demands occupational drivers to satisfy needs of workers according to culturally prescribed expectations. Therefore, work is likely to be deemed meaningful when the social and cultural systems around them ascribe value to their work activities (Rosso et al., 2010). This is due to the fact that the analysis of significance is dependent on social and cultural forces driving interpretations, and not only on individual psychological factors such as experience, perceptions and emotions. Moreover, it has been intimated that some of the earliest writings on the meaning of work are rooted in the perspective that broad social and cultural forces have a powerful influence on the meanings people make of work (Rosso et al., 2010). Although culture has an important role in determining work practices and processes, work also plays an adaptive function to cultural demands in society. This demonstrates the elasticity and indispensability of culture in any human endeavor, and this is obvious with traditional occupations in Africa that nourishes cultural values at work.

Emerging debates on work and environment have recognized cultural patterning as an adaptive mechanism capable of energizing work behaviours and driving a sustainable future (Fomba et al., 2019). Although culture has been positioned as an adaptive strategy in the process of survival, culture remains a way of life, and a way of work life to individuals and communities. Therefore, meaningful work has to be cultivated and harnessed to maximize performance, build strong brands, nurture innovation, and benefit both employees and their host communities (Steger, 2017). Since work affects workers and communities, it requires the deployment of cultural forms in the process

of adaptability. In traditional communities, work activities have been interwoven with their cultural ecology and this is demonstrated through existing traditional beliefs usually expressed through fatalistic practices (Fomba et al., 2019). This is the lifestyle of a people, and it cannot be separated from work activities since activities carried out by members give them collective meaning. At times work activities are actualised as imposing cultural forms based on person-community linkages with regards to expectations of indigenous institutions. This is why at times work is paid in kind using motivators like alcohol, cigarettes, salt or soap (Thornberry, 2017). This is common in rewarding efforts or in reinforcing work behaviours in traditional work settings. Anyway, drawing from the present assessment, the different meanings ascribed to work are significant due to the multi-dimensional nature of workers and their needs at work, and in life in their community as a whole. The essence of exploring meanings is to determine the usefulness of work to individuals and groups, and equally advocates the need to balance work and life values in work processes.

Prospecting Work and Life on a Scale

Placing work and life on a scale portrays the notion of balance and expresses the need for equity and fairness between work and life satisfaction. Work reflects the way values are patterned and recognized as facilities that can reinforce survival, and this is being projected through traditional occupations (Fomba et al., 2019). The concept of work has been examined in terms of needs satisfaction and life adjustment considering that work is designed to satisfy diverse needs of individuals and groups, whether material or non-material. Emerging debates on the significance of work charts a wide terrain across many disciplines and interest is in the benefits that workers derive from work across cultures (Rosso et al., 2010). This no doubt reiterates the significance of work, not only as an economic tool but also as a process of life satisfaction. In the process, work enables people to balance their lives through the consumption of goods and services in any situation, and such could be satisfied through psychological and material incentives. This is why participation in work activities has often been considered as a form of socialization that serves physical and mental development functions (Thornberry, 2017). For instance, the satisfaction of needs that have been embedded in our social, ethical, and cultural structures has been strongly advocated at work considering that deprivation will lead to undesired consequences on the state of the worker (Gill, 1999).

As Western societies have become more fragmented, there has been a breakdown of community and a growing culture where commercial values increasingly dominate and challenge wellbeing of workers (Cartwright and Holmes, 2006). This appears contrary to indigenous African societies where a degree of solidarity exists and extends to work setting with high concern for people, though often low concern for performance. Despite the reticence in western scientific debates on the comprehensive benefits of work, social and behavioural orientations have recognised work as life and life as work. This position strives for a balance between work and life, as two distinct concepts that cannot be practically divorced with regard to decent work. Although work-life research is a social concept originating from Western societies (Akanji, 2013), the practice of WLB is inherent in African culture and occupations. Customarily, work transcends the execution of designated tasks for economic motives to the perception of value in work as part of life. Despite the recognition that modern organisations have been visible in fostering performance and productivity, the intrinsic aspects of African traditional work cannot be oversights, despite deficiencies in theoretical explanations.

Unlike the dichotomy observed in modern structures, work and management of people in indigenous occupations have been done from a purely humanistic and holistic standpoint where work is inalienable to life and vice versa. This is why increased attention needs to be paid to work group situations in different contexts (Thornberry, 2017), and this is the platform on which prevailing practices in the traditional sector is built. There is no doubt that the sector looks unrefined or crude at the surface, but a close look unveils that work is harmonious with meaning and purpose in the worker's life as a whole, expectations of the family and that of the entire community. Despite the inevitable role of the community in fostering collective values of work, extant review of literature in organizational research on the significance of work largely centers on individual perceptions of meaning (Rosso et al., 2010). This portrays the lack of interest or nonchalance, even by African scholars and researchers in exploring the intrinsic values of the indigenous work sector in Africa. Despite the lacuna in documentation, there are elements of practices that agree with norms of decent work, and from which workers reap a lot of benefits other than pay in traditional occupations. Therefore, emerging debates on WLB imply a gentle request to resuscitate African work values as a strategy in fostering meaningful work and sustainable living. This is built on the premise that indigenous occupations are considerably cultural and social expressions capable of fostering the dynamics of balance between work and life.

Generally, changes in the workplace today have tended to significantly increase the demands placed on employees, which are often to the detriment of their health and personal life (Cartwright and Holmes, 2006). But this is not always the case with African traditional occupations since work is always spiced with values and desires of life such as solidarity, eating, drinking and singing together by men, women and children. It is therefore difficult to separate work from their individual and collective identity and operations of daily life. Although the drive towards decent work has ignited critical debates in work life balance, balancing economic interest and factors that contribute to happiness at work has been a big challenge to organizational management processes. In this respect, Gill (1999) argued that the abstraction of non-pecuniary rewards and all potential losses introduce systematic biases into the economic diagnosis of root causes of socio-economic malaise, and the remedies it places on the agenda of social policy. Consequently, many employees and their organisations face challenges in balancing life and work, and this deprives many workers of the intrinsic benefits of life expected to reap at work (Akanji, 2013). Anyway, this raises curiosity on how workers in their quests for rational living manage pressures between their work and community life given the array of challenges being faced by the working population. From the foregoing, it is essential to move beyond economic work to psychosocial and cultural work in order to maximize work-life balance and subjective wellbeing through meaningful work activities and situations.

2.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The present study has underscored the nature and benefit of traditional occupations with the understanding that gains from practice transcend economic to psychosocial and cultural benefits with implication to people management at work. It has been recognized that mainstreaming work life balance is often fraught with challenges due to uncritical reflection and ascription of meaning to work, which is dominantly economic in perspectives. Although the philosophy and practices of

indigenous and modern work appear to differ greatly, there is a common point of meeting, and this is where fairness is achieved between work and life. Despite the fact that industrial relations and the traditional system seems to be poles apart, there are some significant factors in the traditional system observed as capable of infusing into the modern and complicated relationship at work for better results (Akpala, 1984). This justifies the reason for strongly reiterating that there is more to work than money since meaningful work is not just a trivial ascription, but loaded with personal and communal significance. In this respect, economic behaviors are largely influenced by cultural values since coordination and management styles are dictated by social interest (Fomba, 2007, 58). It would be recalled that discussion has unfolded with the juxtaposition of both modern and traditional work scenes to explore meaning and balance in work and life. Another interest is how traditional work values can be resuscitated and integrated into modern work setting in African context in order to meet the needs and desires of local workers. From the foregoing debate, it is evident that traditional occupations maintain an enviable balance between work and life at all levels considering that work activities often extend to social and cultural manifestations and life course of the people with ensuing gains. From all analysis the benefits derived from work often transcend pay to non-monetary benefits, and this has given a lot of meaning to indigenous workers in local contexts.

Recommendations

Although the modern and tradition sectors different in structure, culture and operations they are all interested in decent work and satisfactory work life at all times. Cultural values distinct managerial practices in modern organisations and traditional sector but work in the latter is spiced with life values which are also good for mechanistic organisations in order to balance life and work. The good side of it is that dominant values of traditional labor system are still present in modern work settings and constitute the basis on which small-scale business organizations are structured and managed (Fomba, 2007). This is a genuine recognition of positive features of traditional occupations in the process of developing a work-life balance model that draws in the communal lifestyle of workers. A sorting process should be put in place to determine the progressive values of the traditional sector for necessary integration into mainstream work-life balance strategies building on humanistic values and principles of operations in traditional occupations.

African managers have always deployed Euro-American management style in a purely African context, which is dominated by indigenous occupations. Considering that the present argument is not a rejection of western people management style, the study advocates that there should be resuscitation and integration of indigenous strategies into mainstream human resource management principles and practices. This also gives opportunity to contextualist theory building particularly in the indigenous sector that can be adapted to modern organisations conventionally operating in local contexts. Testing traditional models of practice is the core value interest in human resource management study and the present exploratory work could be of interest to rigorous testing and authentication. This is a fervent appeal to research in people management sciences to use current themes generated in the study on meaningfulness of work and work-life balance and investigate further using mix method approaches especially in validating the claims of the present study through quantitative design.

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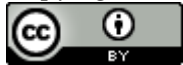
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