

**ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING ON WORK-LIFE
BALANCE AMONG EMPLOYEES AT AL-HIKMAH UNIVERSITY ILORIN****Rasheedat Modupe Oladimeji¹***Email : rmoladimeji@alhikmah.edu.ng**Abstract**

This study explores the influence of strategic planning on work-life balance among employees at Al-Hikmah University in Ilorin, Nigeria. As higher education institutions face increasing demands for productivity and excellence, understanding the interplay between organisational strategies and employee well-being has become critical. The sample size was 110 employees and descriptive statistics and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyse the data. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data, focusing on perceptions of strategic planning and work-life balance. The findings revealed a significant correlation between effective strategic planning and improved work-life balance, emphasising the importance of transparency, inclusivity, and employee engagement in planning processes. Furthermore, the research highlights the impact of organisational culture on the implementation of strategic initiatives, suggesting that a supportive environment is essential for fostering employee satisfaction and retention. It found that transparent and inclusive strategic planning processes lead to a positive work-life balance, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment. The study also highlighted the importance of organisational culture in implementing effective policies. The research emphasises the need for continuous evaluation and adaptation of strategic initiatives to ensure they remain relevant and effective. This study contributes to the existing literature by addressing a notable gap in research regarding the connection between strategic planning and employee well-being in Nigerian higher education. It was recommended among others that creating structured opportunities for employees to participate in the strategic planning process can foster an organisational culture that prioritises employee well-being.

Keywords: Strategic Planning, Work-Life Balance, Employee Well-Being, Higher Education, Organisational Culture

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly changing organisational landscape, strategic planning has become a crucial factor in determining an organisation's success. As institutions strive to meet both institutional objectives and the needs of their employees, the interplay between strategic planning and work-life balance has garnered significant attention. Strategic planning is defined as a systematic process that organisations use to envision their future and develop the necessary procedures and actions to achieve that future (Steiner, 2010). It involves defining the organisation's direction, setting goals and outlining steps to reach those goals. The strategic planning process typically includes an assessment of the internal and external environments, formulation of strategies, implementation, and evaluation (Maleka, 2014). Ahmed et al. (2024) and Kayyali (2025) stated that effective strategic planning aligns organisational resources with its mission and vision, enabling institutions to navigate complex challenges and seize opportunities.

In the context of higher education, strategic planning is particularly critical. Universities face unique challenges, including competition for students, funding constraints, and the need for continuous improvement in educational offerings (Balzer, 2020; Chow & Leung, 2016). The strategic planning process in higher education institutions often involves multiple stakeholders, including faculty, administration and students, each of whom has a vested interest in the institution's success (Hinton, 2012).

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Therefore, understanding how strategic planning influences employee perceptions and behaviours is essential for achieving organisational goals. Work-life balance refers to the equilibrium between work responsibilities and personal life, encompassing family, leisure, and self-care (Bella, 2023; Hutchinson Jr, 2019). The concept has gained prominence in recent years as organisations recognise the importance of employee well-being and its impact on productivity (Nielsen et al., 2017). Research indicates that a healthy work-life balance contributes to job satisfaction, reduces stress, and enhances overall quality of life (Andersz et al., 2018; Aruldoss et al., 2021; Bhende et al., 2020).

The relationship between work-life balance and organisational outcomes is well-documented. Employees who perceive a positive work-life balance are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and committed to their organisations (Caillier, 2013; Oludayo et al., 2018; Wood et al., 2020). Conversely, a lack of balance can lead to burnout, decreased job performance and increased turnover (Boamah et al., 2022; Esthi & Panjaitan, 2023). As such, organisations must implement strategic initiatives that promote work-life balance to attract and retain talent. Effective strategic planning can create an organisational culture that supports employees' needs and promotes well-being (Monteiro & Joseph, 2023). By aligning organisational goals with employee interests, institutions can foster a supportive environment that encourages work-life balance. Research has shown that organisations with a clear strategic vision are better equipped to implement policies that enhance employee well-being. Susilo (2024) found that organisations that prioritise strategic planning are more likely to offer flexible work arrangements, wellness programs and professional development opportunities. These initiatives not only improve work-life balance but also enhance employee satisfaction and performance.

In the context of higher education, strategic planning can influence work-life balance by addressing issues such as workload management, flexible scheduling, and support for family responsibilities (Mwangi et al., 2016; Rajagopal et al., 2024). By incorporating employee feedback into the strategic planning process, universities can identify specific needs and challenges faced by their staff, leading to tailored solutions that promote work-life balance. When employees feel that their voices are heard and their feedback is valued, they are more likely to support organisational initiatives and be engaged in their work (Ruck et al., 2017). Understanding the specific challenges and opportunities at Al-Hikmah University is crucial for assessing the influence of strategic planning on work-life balance. By examining how strategic planning processes are conducted at Al-Hikmah University, this study provides insights into the effectiveness of these initiatives in promoting work-life balance among employees.

Statement of the Problem. Despite the critical role that strategic planning plays in shaping organisational effectiveness, there is a lack of alignment between institutional goals and the well-being of staff, leading to potentially negative outcomes for both employees and the university. In the higher education sector, particularly in Nigeria, institutions face mounting pressures related to funding, competition, and changing educational demands (Becker et al., 2018; Jacob & Gokbel, 2018; Olorube et al., 2013). Employees often experience significant workloads and stress, which can compromise their ability to achieve a healthy work-life balance. Previous research has suggested that organisations that do not prioritise employee well-being may see increased turnover, reduced job satisfaction and lower overall productivity (Agubosim et al., 2023; Haruna & Pongri, 2024; Obinwanne & Kpaji, 2022; Odunayo & Abe, 2023; Olusegun, 2013). However, there is limited empirical evidence specifically examining the connection between strategic planning and work-life balance within Nigerian universities. This gap in existing literature highlights the significance of the problem and the need for focused research.

In the contemporary workplace, the dynamics between organisational goals and employee well-being have become increasingly complex. Institutions of higher education, such as Al-Hikmah University in Ilorin, face unique challenges that necessitate effective strategic planning to align institutional objectives with the needs of their employees. Strategic planning is essential for universities to navigate the complexities of the higher education landscape. According to Bryson and Alston (2011), strategic planning allows organisations to set clear directions and allocate resources effectively to achieve their goals. Without a well-defined strategic plan, universities may struggle to meet both their institutional objectives and the expectations of their employees. Research by Imperatori (2017) indicates that a lack of alignment between strategic goals and employee needs can lead to disengagement and dissatisfaction. This misalignment can hinder the university's ability to create an inclusive work environment where employees feel valued and supported. Consequently, there is a pressing need to investigate how strategic planning processes at Al-Hikmah University can be improved to enhance employee work-life balance. By addressing these issues, Al-Hikmah University can foster a more engaged, satisfied and productive workforce, enhancing its overall effectiveness and success in achieving its institutional goals.

Exploring their perceptions of strategic planning and its effects on their work-life balance. Addressing this problem is crucial for several reasons. First, improving work-life balance can enhance employee satisfaction and retention, which are vigorous for the university's long-term success. Second, a better understanding of the relationship between strategic planning and employee well-being can inform the development of policies that foster a supportive work environment. The findings of this research will benefit university administrators, policymakers, and employees by providing insights into effective strategic initiatives that prioritise well-being.

Purposes of the Study : To identify the key factors within the strategic planning process that influence work-life balance perceptions among employees. To evaluate the role of employee involvement in the strategic planning process and its impact on their engagement and satisfaction. To examine how the organisational culture at Al-Hikmah University affects the implementation of strategic initiatives aimed at promoting work-life balance. To investigate the relationship between strategic planning and work-life balance among employees at Al-Hikmah University.

Research Questions : What are the organisational goals communicated to employees at Al-Hikmah University?, To what extent do employees believe that the strategic planning process incorporates their feedback and concerns? How do employees perceive the effectiveness of current strategic planning initiatives in supporting their work-life balance?. Research Hypothesis. There is no significant relationship between effective strategic planning and work-life balance at Al-Hikmah University Ilorin.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is a systematic process that organisations use to envision their future and develop the necessary actions to achieve that future. According to Poister (2010), strategic planning enables organisations to define their direction, set priorities, and allocate resources effectively. It is not merely a bureaucratic exercise; rather, it serves as a critical tool for aligning an organisation's activities with its mission and vision. The importance of strategic planning cannot be overstated. Kayyali (2025) emphasises that a well-crafted strategic plan provides a framework for decision-making and helps organisations respond to external challenges while capitalising on internal strengths. In the context of higher education, strategic planning is particularly vibrant due to the unique

challenges that institutions face, including funding constraints, competition for students and the need to adapt to changing educational demands (Renfro, 2024). Therefore, effective strategic planning is crucial for ensuring that higher education institutions remain relevant and capable of fulfilling their missions.

The Strategic Planning Process

The strategic planning process typically involves several key steps: environmental scanning, strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Environmental scanning involves analysing both internal and external factors that may impact the organisation (Gray, 2022). This stage is essential for identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis), which form the basis for informed decision-making. Following this analysis, organisations engage in strategy formulation, where specific goals and objectives are established (Clarke & Fuller, 2010). This phase requires collaboration among various stakeholders, including faculty, staff, and administration, to ensure that diverse perspectives are considered. Implementation of the strategic plan involves translating the formulated strategies into actionable tasks and allocating the necessary resources (Poister, 2010). Finally, organisations must evaluate the effectiveness of their strategic plans and make adjustments as needed to respond to changing circumstances.

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance refers to the equilibrium between work responsibilities and personal life, encompassing family, leisure, and self-care (Hutchinson Jr, 2019). This balance is increasingly recognised as a critical aspect of employee well-being and organisational effectiveness. The dimensions of work-life balance can be categorised into three primary areas: time balance, involvement balance and satisfaction balance. Time balance refers to the allocation of time to work and non-work activities while involvement balance pertains to the degree of engagement in work and personal life (Sheyindemi et al., 2023). Satisfaction balance relates to the perceived quality of experiences in both domains. Research indicates that achieving work-life balance positively influences employee performance, satisfaction, and retention (Tirta & Enrika, 2020). Conversely, a lack of balance can lead to stress, burnout, and decreased job performance (Boamah et al., 2022). Therefore, organisations must prioritise strategies that promote work-life balance to enhance employee well-being and overall productivity.

Importance of Work-Life Balance

The importance of work-life balance has gained significant attention in recent years, as organisations recognise its impact on employee morale and organisational success. Paudel et al. (2024) assert that a healthy work-life balance contributes to job satisfaction, reduces absenteeism, and enhances employee engagement. Organisations that promote work-life balance are better positioned to attract and retain top talent, ultimately leading to improved organisational performance (Maurya et al., 2021). In the academic sector, work-life balance is particularly crucial due to the demanding nature of faculty and staff roles. Lester (2015) highlights that educators often face high workloads and expectations, making it essential for universities to implement policies and practices that support work-life balance. Institutions that fail to address these concerns risk experiencing higher turnover rates, decreased job satisfaction and lower productivity among employees.

The Relationship between Strategic Planning and Work-Life Balance

The relationship between strategic planning and work-life balance is multifaceted. Effective strategic planning initiatives can create an organisational culture that supports

employee well-being and promotes work-life balance (Shanmugavelu & Arumugam, 2020; Stankevičienė et al., 2021). Research indicates that organisations with a clear strategic vision are more likely to implement policies that enhance work-life balance, such as flexible work arrangements and wellness programs (Oludayo et al., 2018; Zheng et al., 2015). Moreover, strategic planning processes that incorporate employee feedback are more likely to yield positive outcomes in terms of work-life balance. When employees feel that their voices are heard in the planning process, they are more likely to support initiatives aimed at improving their work-life balance (Phipps & Prieto, 2016). Conversely, strategic plans that do not align with employee needs may lead to frustration and disengagement. In the context of higher education, the alignment of strategic planning with work-life balance is essential for fostering a supportive work environment. Universities that prioritise work-life balance in their strategic initiatives are better equipped to retain talent and enhance employee satisfaction (Mwangi et al., 2016; Saltmarsh & Randell-Moon, 2015). Therefore, understanding the interplay between strategic planning and work-life balance is critical for developing effective strategies that benefit both employees and the institution.

Previous Studies on Strategic Planning and Employee Well-Being

Numerous studies have explored the relationship between strategic planning and employee well-being, highlighting the significance of effective strategic initiatives in promoting a positive work environment. For instance, Gandrita (2023) indicates that organisations that involve employees in the strategic planning process experience higher levels of engagement and satisfaction. This involvement fosters a sense of ownership among employees, making them more likely to support initiatives that promote their well-being. Additionally, Davidescu et al. (2020) found that universities that prioritise strategic planning are more inclined to offer flexible work arrangements and professional development opportunities, which contribute to improved employee satisfaction and retention. Furthermore, the role of organisational culture in influencing the effectiveness of strategic planning initiatives has been emphasised in the literature. Oludayo et al. (2018) argue that organisations with supportive cultures are more successful in implementing work-life balance initiatives, as employees are more likely to embrace changes that align with their values and needs. Conversely, organisations with rigid cultures may struggle to implement effective strategic initiatives, leading to dissatisfaction and disengagement among employees. Effective strategic planning processes that involve employee input and align with organisational culture are essential for fostering a supportive work environment. As such, this study seeks to explore these dynamics further within the context of Al-Hikmah University, contributing to the understanding of how strategic planning influences work-life balance among employees in higher education.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study utilises a quantitative research design to assess the influence of strategic planning on work-life balance among employees at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. A structured questionnaire was employed to collect numerical data, allowing for statistical analysis to identify patterns and relationships. This approach facilitates the objective measurement of variables and the testing of hypotheses regarding the impact of strategic planning on employees' work-life balance.

Population and Sample

The target population for this research consists of all employees at Al-Hikmah

University, including both academic and administrative staff, totalling approximately 220 individuals. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure that various departments and job roles were adequately represented. A sample size of 110 employees was selected to achieve statistical significance and provide a comprehensive analysis of the research questions.

Instruments for Data Collection

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire that includes two main sections:

1. **Perception of Strategic Planning:** This section includes four Likert-scale items assessing how well organisational goals and strategic plans are communicated to employees, as well as their involvement in the planning process.
2. **Work-Life Balance Assessment:** This section evaluates employees' perceptions of how strategic planning initiatives affect their work-life balance, focusing on aspects such as flexibility, workload, and job satisfaction.

Procedures for Data Collection

The data collection process follows these steps:

1. **Pre-testing the Questionnaire:** A pilot test was conducted with a small group of employees (n=10) outside the current study institution to ensure clarity, reliability and validity of the questionnaire items.
2. **Distribution of Questionnaire:** The finalised questionnaire was distributed electronically via Google form to the selected participants, along with instructions for completion.
3. **Collection of Responses:** Participants were given two weeks to complete the questionnaire. Follow-up reminders were sent to enhance response rates.

Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive statistics were utilised to summarise the demographic characteristics of the respondents and key variables measured in the study. This includes calculating means and standard deviations to provide an overview of the data and identify trends. To test the research hypothesis, inferential statistical techniques were employed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Data of the Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents using frequency counts and percentages as illustrated below:

Table 1. Distribution of participants based on demographic

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Academic Staff	56	50.9
Administrative Staff	54	49.1
Total	110	100

Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents' demographics. The table indicates that out of a total of 110 participants, 56 were academic staff, representing 50.9% of the total sample, while 54 were administrative staff, accounting for 49.1% of the total sample. From this, it can be deduced that the majority of the respondents were academic staff.

Research Question One: what are the organisational goals communicated to employees at Al-Hikmah University?

Table 2 Mean and standard deviation showing the organisational goals communicated to employees at Al-Hikmah University?

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Rank
1	The organisational goals at Al-Hikmah University are communicated clearly to all employees.	2.86	0.90	6 th
2	The university's strategic plan aligns with the needs of its employees.	2.90	0.74	4 th
3	Employees are actively encouraged to provide feedback during the strategic planning process.	2.75	0.71	9 th
4	I am aware of the specific objectives outlined in the university's strategic plan.	2.86	0.76	6 th
5	The administration regularly updates staff about changes in the strategic plan.	2.87	0.81	5 th
6	Training is provided to help employees understand the strategic plan.	2.95	0.86	1 st
7	The strategic plan includes initiatives to enhance employees' work-life balance.	2.81	0.71	8 th
8	I believe that management considers employee well-being in its strategic goals.	2.93	0.74	2 nd
9	There are dedicated channels for employees to voice their concerns related to strategic planning.	2.93	0.74	2 nd
10	The strategic planning process at the university is transparent and inclusive.	2.67	0.88	10 th

Table 2 revealed the organisational goals communicated to employees at Al-Hikmah University. The table shows that the respondents agreed to all the items as follows: Training is provided to help employees understand the strategic plan ($\bar{x} = 2.95$), I believe that management considers employee wellbeing in its strategic goals ($\bar{x} = 2.93$), There are dedicated channels for employees to voice their concerns related to strategic planning ($\bar{x} = 2.93$), The university's strategic plan aligns with the needs of its employees ($\bar{x} = 2.90$), The administration regularly updates staff about changes in the strategic plan ($\bar{x} = 2.87$), I am aware of the specific objectives outlined in the university's strategic plan ($\bar{x} = 3.86$), The organisational goals at Al-Hikmah University are communicated clearly to all employees ($\bar{x} = 2.86$), The strategic plan includes initiatives to enhance employees' work-life balance ($\bar{x} = 2.81$), Employees are actively encouraged to provide feedback during the strategic planning process ($\bar{x} = 2.75$) and The strategic planning process at the university is transparent and inclusive ($\bar{x} = 2.67$). Meanwhile, based on the value of the mean of each item, it can be inferred that all the above items are the organisational goals communicated to employees at Al-Hikmah University.

Research Question Two: To what extent do employees believe that the strategic planning process incorporates their feedback and concerns?

Table 3 Mean and standard deviation showing the extent do employees believe that the strategic planning process incorporates their feedback and concerns

S/N	Item	Mean	SD
1	I have access to flexible work arrangements that accommodate my personal needs.	2.81	0.75
2	The leave policies at Al-Hikmah University are flexible and supportive of employees.	2.77	0.87
3	I feel that my workload allows me to maintain a good work-life balance.	2.72	0.87
4	I am satisfied with the amount of vacation time I receive.	2.56	0.83
5	The university provides adequate parental leave for new parents.	2.88	0.80
6	I feel supported in managing family responsibilities while working.	2.69	0.78
7	The university offers resources such as childcare or family care services.	2.84	0.80
8	I believe I can take time off without facing negative consequences.	2.43	0.87
9	There are programs in place to promote mental health and well-being among staff.	2.80	0.85
10	I feel comfortable discussing work-life balance challenges with my supervisor.	2.80	0.73
Weighted Mean		2.73	

Decision Value for Remark: Low= (1:00 – 1:49) Average= (1:50 – 2:49) High= (2:50 – 3:00)

Table 3 reveals the extent employees believe that the strategic planning process incorporates their feedback and concerns. The table shows that the respondents agreed to all the items as follows: I have access to flexible work arrangements that accommodate my personal needs ($\bar{x} = 2.81$), the leave policies at Al-Hikmah University are flexible and supportive of employees ($\bar{x} = 2.77$), I feel that my workload allows me to maintain a good work-life balance ($\bar{x} = 2.72$), I am satisfied with the amount of vacation time I receive ($\bar{x} = 2.56$), The university provides adequate parental leave for new parent ($\bar{x} = 2.88$), I feel supported in managing family responsibilities while working. ($\bar{x} = 2.69$), The university offers resources such as childcare or family care services ($\bar{x} = 2.84$), There are programs in place to promote mental health and well-being among staff ($\bar{x} = 2.80$) and I feel comfortable discussing work-life balance challenges with my supervisor ($\bar{x} = 2.80$) while the respondent disagrees with the item I believe I can take time off without facing negative consequences ($\bar{x} = 2.43$). Meanwhile, based on the value of the weighted average (2.73 out the 4.00 maximum obtainable) which falls on the range for **high**, it can be inferred that the extent employees believe that the strategic planning process incorporates their feedback and concerns is high.

Research Question Three: How do employees perceive the effectiveness of current strategic planning initiatives in supporting their work-life balance?

Table 4. Mean and standard deviation showing how employees perceive the effectiveness of current strategic planning initiatives in supporting their work-life balance

S/N	Item	Mean	SD
1	My department actively encourages a culture that promotes work-life balance.	2.85	0.78
2	I believe that changes in the strategic plan have positively impacted my work-life balance.	2.83	0.79
3	The university's strategic initiatives effectively address employee stress and burnout.	2.51	0.76
4	I feel that the university recognises and rewards efforts to maintain work-life balance.	2.66	0.77
5	Management regularly solicits input on work-life balance initiatives from employees.	2.55	0.83
6	I believe that improved strategic planning would enhance my work-life balance.	3.18	0.69
7	The strategic objectives of the university reflect a commitment to employee well-being.	2.86	0.77
8	I feel engaged in decision-making processes that affect my work-life balance.	2.55	0.86
9	The administration has a clear plan for employee development that supports work-life balance.	2.84	0.76
10	The university fosters an environment where work and personal life can coexist harmoniously.	2.77	0.86
Weighted Mean		2.76	

Decision Value: *Positive* = 0.00-2.49, *Negative* = 2.50-4.00

Table 4 reveals how employees perceive the effectiveness of current strategic planning initiatives in supporting their work-life balance. The table shows that the respondents agreed to all the items as follows: My department actively encourages a culture that promotes work-life balance ($\bar{x} = 2.85$), I believe that changes in the strategic plan have positively impacted my work-life balance ($\bar{x} = 2.83$), The university's strategic initiatives effectively address employee stress and burnout ($\bar{x} = 2.51$), I feel that the university recognises and rewards efforts to maintain work-life balance ($\bar{x} = 2.66$), Management regularly solicits input on work-life balance initiatives from employees ($\bar{x} = 2.55$), I believe that improved strategic planning would enhance my work-life balance ($\bar{x} = 3.18$), The strategic objectives of the university reflect a commitment to employee well-

being ($\bar{x} = 2.86$), I feel engaged in decision-making processes that affect my work-life balance ($\bar{x} = 2.55$), The administration has a clear plan for employee development that supports work-life balance ($\bar{x} = 2.84$) and The university fosters an environment where work and personal life can coexist harmoniously ($\bar{x} = 2.77$). Meanwhile, based on the value of the weighted average (2.76 out of the 4.00 maximum obtainable) which falls in the range of **positive**, it can be inferred that the employees positively perceive the effectiveness of current strategic planning initiatives in supporting their work-life balance.

Research Hypothesis

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between effective strategic planning and work-life balance at Al-Hikmah University Ilorin.

Table 5. Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing a significant relationship between effective strategic planning and work-life balance at Al-Hikmah University Ilorin.

Variable	N	Mean	Std Deviation	r-value	Sig	Decision
Effective Strategic Planning	110	28.32	5.6030			
work-life balance	110	27.30	5.7062	.629	.000	Significant

Table 5 revealed the significant relationship between effective strategic planning and work-life balance at Al-Hikmah University Ilorin. The r value is significant at the 0.05 alpha level (Sig = 0.000 < 0.05), hence the earlier stated hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between effective strategic planning and work-life balance at Al-Hikmah University Ilorin was rejected which implies that there is a significant relationship between effective strategic planning and work-life balance at Al-Hikmah University Ilorin.

Discussion of Findings

The results indicate that organisational goals at Al-Hikmah University are effectively communicated to employees, that employees perceive the strategic planning process as incorporating their feedback, and that there is a significant relationship between effective strategic planning and work-life balance. The findings reveal that training is provided to help employees understand the strategic plan, and management actively considers employee well-being in its strategic goals. Previous studies by Albrecht et al. (2015) and LaMacchia (2021), emphasise the importance of clear communication in enhancing employee engagement and understanding of organisational objectives. The current study's results align with this literature, suggesting that effective communication of goals fosters a culture of transparency and inclusivity. Moreover, the relatively high mean scores for items related to communication indicate that employees feel informed about the university's strategic objectives. This is consistent with findings by Thamrin (2012), who noted that organisations that prioritise communication are more likely to experience increased employee satisfaction and commitment.

The research also indicates a high degree of belief among employees that their feedback is considered in the strategic planning process. The weighted mean of 2.73 suggests that employees feel their voices are heard, which is crucial for fostering an inclusive work environment. This finding resonates with the work of Sherf et al. (2021), who highlighted that organisations that solicit and integrate employee feedback into decision-making processes tend to enhance job satisfaction and performance. However, the item where employees expressed concerns about taking time off without facing negative consequences (mean = 2.43) indicates room for improvement. This aligns with

studies by Anitha (2014), which pointed out that perceived job security and support systems significantly influence employee morale and productivity. Organisations should strive to create a culture where employees feel safe to express their needs without fear of repercussions.

When examining the effectiveness of strategic planning initiatives in supporting work-life balance, the findings indicate a positive perception among employees. The weighted mean of 2.76 suggests that employees believe current initiatives contribute to their work-life balance. This is in line with research by Kashyap et al. (2016), who argued that effective strategic planning should prioritise employee well-being and work-life integration. Notably, employees expressed strong beliefs that improved strategic planning could further enhance their work-life balance (mean = 3.18). This finding highlights the necessity for continuous improvement and adaptation of strategic initiatives to meet the evolving needs of the workforce (Orieno et al., 2024). The study's results confirm a significant relationship between effective strategic planning and work-life balance, with an R-value of 0.629. This finding is consistent with the literature, particularly the work of Ispiryan et al. (2024), which established that strategic alignment between organisational goals and employee needs is essential for fostering a supportive work environment. The rejection of the null hypothesis indicates that effective strategic planning directly influences employees' perceptions of their work-life balance, suggesting that organisations should prioritise strategic initiatives that consider employee feedback and well-being. Future research should explore specific strategies that can further bridge any gaps identified in employee perceptions, especially concerning work-life balance policies.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the influence of strategic planning on work-life balance among employees at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. The findings highlight the critical role that effective strategic planning plays in enhancing employee well-being and satisfaction. The analysis revealed that employees who perceive their institution's strategic planning processes as transparent and inclusive are more likely to experience a positive work-life balance. Involving employees in these processes fosters a sense of ownership and commitment, which is essential for promoting engagement and support for initiatives that benefit their well-being. Additionally, the study highlighted the significant impact of organisational culture on the success of strategic planning initiatives. A culture that values work-life balance and employee welfare is crucial for implementing effective policies. Conversely, a culture focused solely on productivity can undermine efforts to create a supportive work environment. Moreover, the research emphasised the importance of continuous evaluation and adaptation of strategic initiatives to ensure they remain relevant and effective in meeting the evolving needs of employees. In conclusion, the findings indicate that by prioritising strategic planning that incorporates employee feedback and promotes a balanced workplace culture, Al-Hikmah University can enhance job satisfaction, retention and overall organisational performance. Based on the findings of the results, the researcher has proposed the following recommendations

1. The institution should create structured opportunities for employees to participate in the strategic planning process, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment.
2. The institution should implement comprehensive policies that promote work-life balance, including flexible work arrangements, wellness programs and support for caregiving responsibilities.
3. The institution should foster an organisational culture that prioritises employee well-being by promoting values that support work-life balance and recognising departments that exemplify these values.

4. The institution should invest in regular training and development focused on strategic planning and work-life balance to equip employees and leaders with the necessary skills to navigate challenges effectively.
5. The institution should establish a system for regularly evaluating the effectiveness of strategic initiatives on employee work-life balance and job satisfaction to ensure continuous improvement.

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