

Sustaining Employee Performance: Evaluating Predictors' Effects in the Post-Covid-19 Era

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This paper evaluates the impacts of perceived despotic leadership (DL), quality of work-life (QWL), and innovative work behavior (IWB) on employee performance (EP) in Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19. The sample for this study was obtained from five (5) banks in Lagos and Oyo States, Nigeria. These five (5) banks are Zenith Bank Plc, Guarantee Trust Bank Plc, First City Monument Bank Limited, United Bank for Africa Plc, and First Bank of Nigeria Plc. This study implemented a cross-sectional questionnaire method, and surveys were randomly distributed. Nevertheless, from the 400 surveys distributed, 388 were retrieved, concluded adequate for use, and analyzed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS version 28). This study indicated a substantial relationship between perceived DL, QWL, and innovative work behavior. It further stated the considerable individual and collective impact of perceived DL, QWL, and IWB on EP within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19. Leaders and managers of businesses are urged to examine and implement the most appropriate leadership styles for the varied circumstances, and companies are still battling challenges post-Covid-19. They should also consistently promote job clarity, job satisfaction, security, employee participation in decision-making, communication, and support. This increases employees' QWL in the workplace. Further, the management should encourage innovative management exercises, which are fundamental in sustaining employee performance post-Covid-19.

Keywords: leadership, quality of work-life, innovation, employee performance, Nigeria

JEL Classification: G21, J28, O32, P17

1. Introduction

The universe suffers from COVID-19. Worldwide, up to late January 2021, over 99 million incidents of COVID-19, with over 2 million deaths, were noted. Human beings face the most austere public health disaster. Consequently, the pandemic has elicited a socio-economic problem: thousands of businesses have been forced to downscale, and millions of workers have lost their jobs (Bavel et al., 2020; Blustein et al., 2020).

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Article History:

Received 12 August 2022 | Accepted 11 October 2022 | Available online 30 October 2022

Cite Reference:

Adekanmbi, F.P. and Ukpere, W.I., 2022. Sustaining Employee Performance in the Post-Covid-19 Era: Evaluating Predictors' Effects. *Expert Journal of Business and Management*, 10(2), pp.91-101.

One of the critical business factors to look at during the post-Covid-19 era is employees' performance, as it remains an organizational practice that supports workers' skills, development plans, capability, and results (Bukhtiarova et al., 2022). The effective management of employees' performance should contribute to businesses' success and profitability by ensuring that individual energies are linked to business objectives (Cushway, 2015). EP has constantly been a significant task in management because it relies on attitude, perception, and values. Attaining higher performance levels remains the most considerable adage of every business. Hence, recognizing the significance of employee performance on the success of an organization is essential in analytically determining components that can improve employee performance (Bukhtiarova et al., 2022; Mishra et al., 2020).

Leadership remains a vital element of organizational and employee success. Responsible organizational leadership inspires a positive social impact that boosts its employees' commitment and efforts to attain the larger good for its employees and business (Haque et al., 2020). While reliable leaders and managers help increase organizational and employee performance, bad leadership fails to motivate employees' performance, inspire, and generate green value for any business (Hogan and Kaiser, 2005; Thoroughgood et al., 2018). Ruthless leaders are noted as despotic managers who stimulate job strains that reduce employee commitment and loyalty, have damaging and abusive behaviors that often drive distrust between managers and subordinates, and reduce employees' prospects to help attain the best level of performance (Naseer et al., 2016; Nauman et al., 2020). Still, DL is an under-researched area, as its effects on subordinates' behaviors and performance are less explored, particularly in psychology and management (Naseer et al., 2016).

Quality of work-life measures employees' satisfaction with meeting their various needs, which can be achieved by partaking in several organizational events and accomplishing professional and individual workplace results. This can be achieved through a fair reward system, a satisfying career, open communication, a concern for job security, caring leadership, and participation in management (Newstrom, 2014). Besides, QWL could be noted as the favorableness or unfavorableness of an employee's work environment. It has become a significant issue in the contemporary workplace and post-Covid-19 (Majumder and Biswas, 2021).

IWB is when a worker deliberately creates, presents, and employs fresh concepts that profit performance in a group, work position, or business. However, creativity, as different from innovative work behavior, is established as a vital concept linked to innovation because of the application of ideas of IWB (Amabile and Pratt, 2016). Lin and Liu (2012) indicated that the IWB of employees in the service business is the core factor that adds to the performance of service businesses. The banking industry is prominent (Ho et al., 2019). Notably, discovering factors that increase the IWB of each worker is considered an essential solution for the banking industry in meeting the necessities of innovative development in the latest years (Ho et al., 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an unmatched global reduction in economic activity, and Nigeria is no exception. It had a negative impact on financial corporations in Nigeria, which are facing sharp falls in profitability and a deterioration in their repayment capacity (Nigeria Centre for Disease Control NCDC, 2020). Banking businesses deliver customer services by giving financial-needs solutions. Hence, human resources are needed to achieve this objective (Thalassinis et al., 2015; Bernanthos, 2018). While the impacts of some elements have been investigated in prior studies, the independent and joint implications of despotic leadership, quality work-life, and IWB on EP post-Covid-19 have not been well explored. Consequently, this research aims to increase the literature by examining the influences of perceived DL, quality work-life, and IWB on EP within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19 era to infer an applied model to inspire, increase, and sustain EP. After the introduction of this research, other expressions have been divided into four parts: the literature review and hypotheses statements, methods espoused, research findings, and the discussion of results. Besides, the limitations, implications, and conclusions are also presented.

2. Literature Review

This study's literature review covers perceived despotic leadership, quality work-life, innovative work behavior, and employee performance.

2.1. Despotic Leadership and Employee Performance

Leaders are significant in building a welcoming workplace, increasing employee satisfaction and motivation, and improving employee mindsets, which define workplace proficiency. Hence, leadership influences others to attain organizational vision and goals by motivating workers in several ways (Al-Maamari et al., 2018). Progressively, researchers have focused more on exploring the influences of leadership's dark side (i.e., despotic leadership) on performance and efficacy (Naseer et al., 2016). Employee performance is custom-made for a business's community and capacity; Hence, successful employee performance is influenced by a complex factor such as leadership style, which ultimately affects the organization's success (Gregory and Kaufeldt 2015). The shady side of leadership is an unending behavior displayed by a leader that leads to general adverse organizational results centered on the interfaces between the followers, the leader, and the work setting. Hence, despotic behavior is the behavior that focuses on having rules and control over subordinates; it is inspired by a leader's selfishness (Nauman et al., 2018). Despotic (autocratic) leaders are bossy, manipulative, conceited, and intolerant (Naseer et al., 2016). Findings have indicated a substantial correlation between DL and employee performance (Grandey and Gabriel, 2015; Nauman et al., 2018). Also, a prior study noted that employees might lessen practical commitment by work withdrawal or provoke deviant workplace behaviors to react against and cope with the perceived despotic behavior of their leaders/supervisors (Shoss et al., 2016). DL negatively influences EP and ingenuity (Naseer et al., 2016).

2.2. Quality Work-Life and Employee Performance

Employees' everyday QWL remains a significant issue (Majumder and Biswas, 2021). QWL is an organizational program to create a pleasant and comfortable work environment to increase ER (Kaharuddin, 2020). A study indicated the QWL as a psychological resource that could significantly influence employee attitudes and work behaviors (Kim et al., 2017). During the Covid-19 pandemic, employees' work-life became a particular issue in a business setting. Hence, the quality of work-life got hampered (Jaiswal and Arun 2020). However, QWL should be saved and improved upon post-Covid-19 (Majumder and Biswas, 2021). Scholars have confirmed that QWL leads to higher EP and a better work environment (Sirgy et al., 2001; Quade et al., 2019). Kim et al. (2017) found that QWL impacts ER in Korea. Also, Dey et al. (2018) noted that employees' quality of life significantly influenced their performance. Wulantika (2018) reported a substantial effect of the QWL on employee performance. Moreover, Hermawati (2021) opined that the QWL significantly impacts EP within the work organization. The studies of Gupta (2013) and Thardsatien (2016) showed a positive link between QWL and EP.

2.3. Innovative Work Behavior and Employee Performance

Demircioglu and Audretsch (2017) opined that it is fundamental for an organization to motivate employees to improve their performance by being innovative and creative in their work process. When linked to creativity, IWB has a different purpose and emphasizes finding, planning, using, and evaluating new concepts. Thus, creativity is a sub-dimension of IWB (Afsar and Badir, 2017; Lee et al., 2019). In addition, Wynen et al. (2014) indicated the significant impact of IWB in achieving high employee performance. Prior study has established a substantial correlation between IWB and employee performance (Dörner, 2012). Also, Purwanto et al. (2020) reported innovative work behavior's significant and positive influence on employee performance. Their position corroborated other scholars' who opined that IWB significantly and positively impacts employee performance (Suifan et al., 2018; Afsar and Umrani, 2019; Farahnak et al., 2020). Besides, previous findings indicated that higher IWB increases employee performance (Constance et al., 2019). Afsar et al. (2015) also established that innovative work behavior positively affects employee performance.

2.4. DL, QWL, IWB, and EP

A despotic leadership style has a detrimental effect on the employees, affecting their QWL and organizational functioning (De Clercq et al., 2018). Also, Rasool et al. (2019) indicated that despotic leaders exhibit self-centered behaviors such as showing an authority image, berating employees, using dictatorial power, and belittling employees' working abilities. These behaviors make employees lose passion for work and self-confidence and negatively impact their job satisfaction. Leadership is crucial as leaders are central to inspiring positive employee behavior. Hence, leaders are central to shaping the working setting, resource

availability, and the nature of employment tasks (Fischer et al., 2017). Lee et al. (2019) established that despotic leaders mandate total compliance from their followers. The followers, therefore, would be less ready to display creativity and proactivity in coming up with new methods of performing their tasks. Consequently, despotic leadership inhibits employee creativity and innovation. Managers must understand the importance and impact of QWL on creativity, proactivity, and employee responsiveness. Hence, an employee's QWL affects innovation through its association with innovative workforce capacity (Warhurst et al., 2017). Besides, high-performance workforce policies have been noted to influence employees' IWB in terms of finding, proposing, and applying new and valuable work-related ideas (De Spiegelaere et al., 2014). Furthermore, when employees have job clarity, they use the time saved and understanding to produce and implement new ideas (Mufti et al., 2019).

3. Research Premise

Through the reflections on the perceived despotic leadership (DL), quality of work-life (QWL), innovative work behavior (IWB), and employee performance (EP) stated above; this study postulated that:

- *H1*. Perceived despotic leadership significantly impacts employee performance within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19.
- *H2*. Perceived quality work-life significantly influences employee performance within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19.
- *H3*. Innovative work behavior (IWB) significantly predicts employee performance within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19.
- *H4*. There is substantial interaction between despotic leadership (DL), quality of work-life (QWL), and innovative work behavior (IWB) within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19.
- *H5*. Despotic leadership (DL), quality of work-life (QWL), and innovative work behavior (IWB) jointly influence employee performance (EP) within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19.

4. Research Methodology

This study implemented a cross-sectional questionnaire method. Surveys were disseminated among participants to gather data on their views on DL, QWL, IWB, and EP. Surveys were randomly administered to 400 staff from 5 banks in Lagos and Oyo States, Nigeria. The five (5) banks are Zenith Bank Plc, Guarantee Trust Bank Plc, First City Monument Bank Limited, United Bank for Africa Plc, and First Bank of Nigeria Plc. This study inspired voluntary contributions from the respondents and guaranteed respect for ethical matters. Three hundred eighty-eight (388) questionnaires were retrieved and selected for use. The recovered data was cleaned and analyzed with Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS version 28). Nevertheless, this study piloted a reliability test to realize the scale's local reliability. This investigation's questionnaire has the following units:

Section A: Respondents' Demographics - This segment covers the respondents' demographics.

Section B: despotic leadership (DL) - Perceived DL was measured with the 6-item scale developed by De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008). The measure stretched from (1 = Strongly Disagree) to (5 = Strongly Agree), with a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .82$. However, this investigation attained a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .90$.

Section C: quality of work-life (QWL) - The items of QWL were adopted from Sirgy et al. (2001). This measure comprised 16 items, with seven sub-sections: the satisfaction of health and safety needs, the satisfaction of actualization needs, the satisfaction of economic and family needs, the satisfaction of social needs, the satisfaction of esteem needs, the satisfaction of knowledge needs, and the satisfaction of aesthetic needs. The whole measure had a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .91$. Its reply set-up varies from (1 = Strongly Disagree) to (5 = Strongly Agree). This paper, however, achieved an $\alpha = .93$ reliability coefficient.

Section D: innovative work behavior (IWB) - This measure is about the participants' views about their IWB. The scale was implemented from Kleysen and Street's (2001) study. It contained 14 statements, with a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .94$. Nonetheless, the current investigation attained a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .92$. This scale has a 6-point Likert answer set-up.

Section E: employee performance (EP) - This unit comprised items measuring perceived employee performance. This scale was adopted from the study of Na-Nan et al. (2018). It contained 13 items classified under three sub-sections: Job Time (4 items), Job Quality (5 items), and Job Quantity (4 items). The Job Time had a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .86$, Job Quality $\alpha = .88$, and Job Quantity $\alpha = .84$. A reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .90$ was realized in this study. For Job Quality, the recent research attains a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .91$, while the current research attains an $\alpha = .93$ reliability coefficient. The reliability coefficient of the whole measure was $\alpha = .89$, while the present study reached an $\alpha = .91$ reliability coefficient. Every statement was answered using a 5-point Likert-type answer rule.

5. Analysis and Results

This study piloted research to detect probable glitches and authenticate the measuring instrument's efficacy. Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 5 were analyzed with multiple linear regression, while hypothesis 4 was diagnosed with Zero-Order correlations. The results from the analyzed data in this study are shown below:

Table 1: Zero-Order correlations presenting the interrelationship between DL, quality of work-life, and IWB within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19.

		Despotic Leadership	Quality of Work-Life	Innovative Work Behavior
Despotic Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	-.692**	-.851**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.001
	N	388	388	388
Quality of Work-Life	Pearson Correlation	-.692**	1	.691**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.001
	N	388	388	388
Innovative Work Behavior	Pearson Correlation	-.851**	.691**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001	
	N	388	388	388

Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2: Multiple regressions showing the combined effect of perceived DL, quality of work-life, and IWB on EP within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19.

Model	R	R-squared	Adjusted R-squared	F	Sig
1	.989 ^a	.978	.978	5746.199	.000

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance; b. Predictors: (Constant), Innovative Work Behavior, Quality of Work-Life, Despotic Leadership

Table 3: Measurements of the predictors of EP

Influencers	B	β	t	Sig	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		R	R ²	F (3, 388)	P
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound				
(Constant)	18.211		16.405	.001	16.028	20.393	.989 ^a	978	5746.199	<0.01
Perceived Despotic Leadership	-.580	-.366	-24.543	.001	-.626	-.534				
Perceived Quality of Work-Life	.343	.391	36.146	.001	.324	.362				
Perceived Innovative Work Behavior	.332	.330	22.187	.001	.302	.361				

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

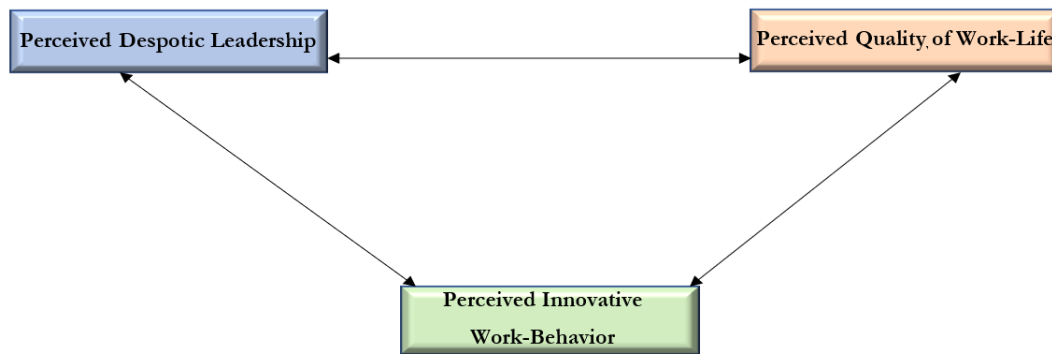


Figure 1: Zero-Order correlations model presenting the relationship between DL, quality of work-life, and IWB within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19.

This study conducted correlation and linear regression analyses to address the proposed hypotheses.

To test hypotheses 1 to 3, **Table 3** indicates a substantial negative impact of despotic leadership on employee performance within Nigeria's banks ($\beta = -0.366$; $p < .001$). Despotic leadership decreases employee performance within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19. So, the specified premise is established: perceived despotic leadership significantly impacts EP within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19. The results also imply that the QWL significantly and positively affects employee performance ($\beta = 0.391$; $p < .001$). This means that employees' work-life quality in Nigeria's banks increased their performance post-Covid-19. Hence, the stated premise is established: perceived QWL significantly impacts employee performance within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19. Moreover, the results suggest that perceived innovative work behavior significantly and positively influences employee performance ($\beta = 0.330$; $p < .001$). This finding infers that the employees' innovative work behavior within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19 increases their performance levels. Therefore, the stated proposition is established: IWB significantly predicts EP within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19.

To test Hypothesis 4, the stemming matrix from **Table 1** shows that DL significantly and negatively relates to the QWL ($r = -.692$; $p < .01$) and innovative work behavior ($r = -.851$; $p < .01$) within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19. The p-value is enough. Also, the QWL of employees in Nigeria's banks notably and positively correlates with their IWB ($r = .691$; $p < .01$). The p-value is sufficient. So, the stated postulation is accepted: there is a significant interaction between DL, QWL, and innovative work behavior within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19.

In testing hypothesis 5, **Table 2** shows that perceived DL, QWL, and IWB significantly and jointly impact EP within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19 ($R = .989$, $R^2 = .978$, $F = 5746.199$, $p < .01$). The p-value is abundant. These findings indicate that DL, quality of work-life, and IWB notably, jointly, and positively encouraged a 98.9% change in EP. Thus, the postulation has established that DL, QWL, and IWB collectively influence EP within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper's findings revealed that perceived despotic leadership notably and negatively impacts employee performance within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19. This observation assumes that adopting autocratic leadership, which stimulates job strains that lower employee commitment and loyalty, exhibits damaging and abusive behaviors, diminishing employees' possibilities to help attain the best level of performance and decreasing employee performance within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19. This result corroborates the evidence that noted a significant correlation between despotic leadership and EP (Grandey and Gabriel, 2015; Nauman et al., 2018). It also supports Shoss et al.'s (2016) opinion that employees might lessen active engagement through withdrawal or stimulate deviant workplace behaviors to react against and cope with the perceived despotic behavior of their leaders/supervisors. The present finding further corroborates Naseer et al.'s (2016) position that DL negatively influences EP, organizational citizenship behavior and originality.

This paper has established a significant positive effect of the QWL on employee performance within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19. The findings imply that the more QWL employees experience within Nigeria's banks, the more their performance. These results add to some researchers' views (e.g., Kaharuddin, 2020;

Sirgy et al., 2001; Quade et al., 2019) that the QWL is an organizational program to create a pleasant and comfortable work setting to increase EP. This result is also aligned with empirical evidence from Kim et al. (2017), Dey et al. (2018), and Hermawati (2021). They opined that the QWL significantly impacts employee performance within the work organization, indicating a positive influence. This paper also supports the finding of Thardsatien (2016), who showed a positive correlation between QWL and employee performance.

Besides, this paper established that IWB notably and positively impacts EP within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19. This infers that there will be increased EP within Nigeria's banks as much as workers make and definitively apply innovative novel ideas. Thus, these findings corroborate Wynen et al. (2014), who indicated the significant impact of IWB in achieving high EP. These findings also confirm the position of Purwanto et al. (2020), who reported a significant and positive influence of innovative work behavior on EP. The present findings further corroborate the results of Suifan, Abdallah, and Al Janini (2018), Afsar and Umrani (2019), Farahnak et al. (2020), and Constance et al. (2019). They noted that IWB significantly and positively impacts employee performance.

Furthermore, this study notes that DL is significantly and negatively related to the QWL and IWB. This observation infers that the more leaders assume autocratic leadership within Nigeria's banks, the less the QWL of banks works, and the less they exhibit IWB. Thus, it endorses De Clercq et al. (2018) 's position that a despotic leadership style has a detrimental effect on employees, affecting their work-life quality and organizational functioning. The current finding also supports Rasool et al. (2019). They indicated that despotic leaders exhibit self-centered behaviors such as showing an authority image, berating employees, using dictatorial power, and belittling employees' working abilities. These behaviors make employees lose passion for work and self-confidence and negatively impact their job satisfaction. The result also supports the discoveries of Lee et al. (2019), which cited that despotic leaders mandate total compliance from their followers. The followers, therefore, would be less ready to display creativity and proactivity in coming up with new methods of performing their tasks. Consequently, despotic leadership inhibits employee creativity and innovation. Moreover, this paper confirms Warhurst et al. (2017) view that an employee's quality of work-life affects innovation through its association with innovative workforce capacity. It also supports the literature by Mufti et al. (2019) that when employees have job clarity, they use the time saved and understanding to produce and implement new ideas.

This paper has further proven that DL, quality of work-life, and IWB notably, jointly, and positively impact employee performance within Nigeria's banks post-Covid-19. Hence, these results show that DL, QWL, and IWB significantly, together, and positively stimulated a 98.9% change in EP. The remaining 1.1% variation in employee performance resulted from other predictors not considered in this study. Consistent with the present findings, this paper aims to infer a practical model to encourage, increase, and sustain employee performance post-Covid-19. Thus, the model in **figure 2**:

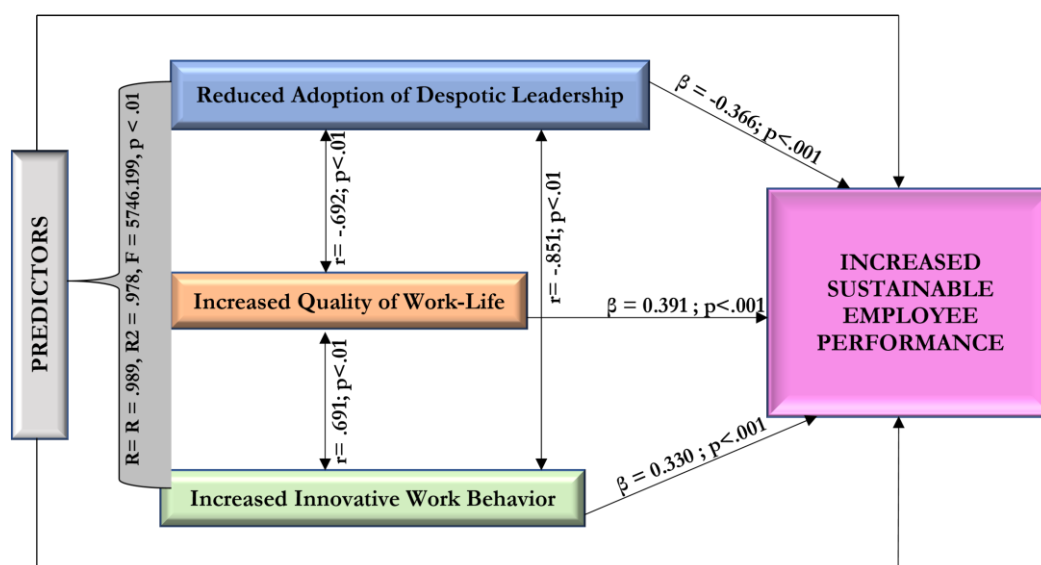


Figure 2: Joint and individual impact of perceived DL, QWL, and IWB on EP in the banking industry post-COVID-19. Source: Paper's findings

This paper concludes that despotic leadership significantly reduces EP, while the QWL and innovative work behavior substantially increase employee performance within the banking industry. It further settles that DL, QWL, and IWB significantly and jointly impact EP. Besides, this paper concludes that despotic leadership has a negative relationship with the QWL and employees' innovative work behavior. At the same time, a positive correlation exists between the QWL and the IWB of employees within the banking industry post-Covid-19. Consequently, these stated factors significantly impact EP in the banking industry.

6.1. Contribution

The contribution of this paper is that it adds to the literature on leadership, work-life experiences, employee performance, employee development, human resources management, and employment relations management. It also provides evidence that businesses can enjoy and increase employee performance and diminish the challenges and consequences of Covid-19 within the banking industry.

6.2. Managerial Implications or Policy Implications

The results of this investigation provide strategies for leaders, managers, and human resources specialists on how to equip themselves better, for the sustainability of performance post-Covid-19, specifically by assuming more good leadership styles, employee participation in decision-making, ensuring more job clarity, and strategies to increase innovative management exercises. Attracting this will make business leaders, managers, and banks react more appropriately to the risks and challenges inspired by Covid-19. Also, the perceptions and information provided in this paper may help organizations leverage such acumens and knowledge. It further advances management practices related to selecting leadership style, quality of work-life, organizational support, and innovative practices appropriate for different challenges and situations organizations are still battling with post-Covid-19.

6.3. Limitations of study / Future directions of research

This research was limited to a quantitative method. Hence, it could not provide a practical exploration to understand better factors predicting EP post-Covid-19.

6.4. Recommendation

Nonetheless of the paper's conclusion, the following recommendations are helpful. This paper encourages business management to explore and implement the most appropriate leadership styles for the diverse situations, and challenges organizations are still facing post-Covid-19. Given the sensitive nature of employees' work-life influenced by Covid-19, employers should always encourage job clarity, job satisfaction, security, and employee participation in decision-making, communication, and support. This increases employees' QWL in work organizations. Furthermore, leaders and the management in the banking industry should inspire innovative management exercises because they are vital to sustaining employee performance post-Covid-19.

Author Contributions: Foluso Philip Adekanmbi: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Data Curation, Writing - Original Draft. Wilfred Isioma Ukpere: Writing - Review & Editing, Visualization, Supervision.

Acknowledgments: I acknowledge the Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management, College of Business and Economics, University of Johannesburg, under Professor Wilfred Isioma Ukpere, for funding this research and its publication.

Funding: This research was funded by the Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management, College of Business and Economics, University of Johannesburg.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors have no conflicts of interest.

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