EFFECTS OF WORKPLACE CHARACTERISTICS ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF WOMEN IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC SECTOR

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Abstract
The number of women working outside home setting is on the increase in Nigeria. This is due to changes in their roles as helpers and even breadwinners in some instances. But, this has not removed their traditional roles of being the home keepers. Women are in charge of home management and they are expected to use the available resources effectively to cater for the family. However, theses are often clash with working conditions such as heavy workloads, lack of participation in decision-making, health and safety hazards, job insecurity, and tight deadlines. This often leads to work-life conflict. Work-life conflict occurs when the cumulative demands of work and non-work life roles are incompatible in some respect so that participation in one role is made more difficult by participation in the other role. This study, therefore, examined the impacts of workplace characteristics on work-life balance of women in the Nigerian Public Sector. A total of 886 women were randomly selected from three states in south west Nigeria-Lagos, Ogun and Oyo states. These participants were selected from three federal and state ministries- education, health and information. The finding of this study reveals that there is a significant difference in work-life balance of women with supportive and unsupportive bosses in the Nigerian public sector at t=21.56, df =884 and <0.05 significant level. A significant difference in work-life balance of women working in departments where overtime is required and those working where it does not required at t=18.24, df =884 and <0.05 significant level was equally found. It was concluded that many women are having work-life conflict which are caused by unsupportive bosses and other hostile working environments. It was recommended the on-going public service reforms in Nigeria should consider the welfare of women and make available work-life policies which include flexible work scheduling, family leave policies allowing periods away from work for employees to take care of family matters, and childcare assistance.

Keywords-gender, women, work-life balance, level of income, public sector

Background to the Study
Work-life balance has always been a concern of those interested in the quality of working life and its relation to broader quality of life. Yet work-life balance has come to the fore in contemporary debates largely because in developing societies the excessive demands of work are perceived to present a distinctive issue that needs to be addressed. Many developing nations are poor and working women are the receiving end.

The number of women working outside home setting is on the increase. This is due to changes in their roles as helpers and even breadwinners in some instances. The situation, where the fathers used to work and the mother stays at home to care for the home and children, has changed. However, despite this tremendous changes most workplaces are still guided by traditional company polices that were fashionable when only fathers were sole

providers of family finances. Such arrangements are no doubt clearly distant from the reality of today's diverse workplace that is increasingly populated with mothers, single parents, and dual- career couples.

Married women in developed nations enjoy work-life policies which include flexible work scheduling, family leave policies allowing periods away from work for employees to take care of family matters, and childcare assistance (Burke & Cooper, 2002). All these are absent in Nigeria and this is a double tragedies for working women, poverty with unfavourable working conditions. Women in Nigerian public sector are expected to perform the same way as their male counterparts without taking into cognisance their dual roles as family keepers and employees.

The public sector in Nigeria refers to all organisations that exist as part of government machinery for implementing policy decisions and delivering services that are of value to citizens. It is a mandatory institution under the Nigerian Constitution of 1999. Chapter VI of the Constitution, Executive, Part 1 (D) and Part II (C) provides for a public service at the federal and state levels of government. The Public Sector in Nigeria is made up of the Civil Service, which is often referred to as the core service and is composed of line ministries and extra-ministerial agencies and the Public Bureaucracy, which is composed of the enlarged public service, including the following: (a) Services of the state and national assemblies; (b) The judiciary; (c) The armed forces; (d) The police and other security agencies; (e) Paramilitary services (immigration, customs, prisons, etc); (f) 'Parastatals' and agencies including social service, commercially oriented agencies, regulatory agencies, educational institutions, research institutes, etc.

Though the Nigerian public service has undergone changes and transformation over the years, unfortunately, successive reforms have not made significant impact on welfare of women. Ezeigbo (1996) observed that most Nigerian women live under stress because of the responsibilities at home and work.

This situation is referred to as work-family conflict. Work family conflict has been defined as a "mutual incompatibility between the demands of the work role and the demand of the family role" (s). One of the first studies documenting the extent of work family conflict was Michigan Quality of Employment survey (Quinn and Staines, 1997). Quinne and Staines found that 38% of men and 43% of women who were married and who had jobs and children reported that job and family life conflicted "somewhat" or "a lot". Workplace characteristics can also contribute to higher levels of work-family conflict. Researchers have found that the number of hours worked per week, the amount and frequency of overtime required, an inflexible work schedule, unsupportive supervisor, and an in hospitable organisational culture for balancing work and family all increase the likelihood that women employees will experience conflict between their work and family role (Galinsky, Bond, and Friedman, 1996, Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Thompson, Beauvais and Lyness, 1999; Frone, Yardley, and Markel, 1997). Baruch and Barnett (1997), for example, found that women who had multiple life roles (e.g., mother, wife, employee) were less depressed and had higher self-esteem than women who were more satisfied in their marriages and jobs compared to women and men who were not married, unemployed, or childless. Baruch and Barnett (1987), however, argued that it is the quality of role rather than the quantity of roles that matters. That is, there is a positive association between multiple roles and good mental health when a woman likes her job and likes her home life.

Although not every woman who attempts to balance multiple work and non-work roles experiences conflict, a substantial number of women employees do. Researchers have found that trying to balance work and family roles can result in job and family distress, work family conflict, job and life dissatisfaction, depression, anxiety, anger/hostility, and perception of a lower quality of life (Duxbury and Higgnnis, 1991; Frone, Rusell, and Cooper, 1992, Thomas and Granster, 1995). There are also unhealthy consequences for the organisation including absenteeism, tardiness and loss of talented employees (Kossek, 1998). Additionally negative mental and physical health outcomes have been related to high level of work-family conflict and work to family conflict (Barnett and Rivers, 1996, Boles et at, 1997; Frone 2002; Frone et at 1997).

Theoretical Framework

The study relies on social contract theory to explain the intricacies of work-life balance of women working in public sector in Nigeria. Social contract theory posits that in order to live above the state of nature, man gave up their natural rights and subjected themselves to the authority of the state. It is in an expectation that the state is organised to achieve the greatest happiness for all and create conducive atmosphere for individual as well as group actualisation and fulfillment. Locke's social contract theory exerts a considerable influence on the philosophy of leadership in the western world. The governments in those countries accept responsibility in

meeting the needs of the working women hence enormous resources are usually allocated to cater for the wellbeing of this category of citizens. Countries that lack a sense of contract to its citizens pay lip service and little attention to their fulfillment.

Statement of Problem

Managing the conflict between family and work obligations is an important issue. The demands of family and work pose critical challenges to individuals, researchers, and organisations. Because of the openness of the economy, political changes, and changes in societal values, the balance of job and family obligations has shifted dramatically. In Nigeria, men have traditionally played the role of breadwinner in the family. With the shifts in family and work domains, individuals must face and adapt to the inter-role conflict (Frone and Rice, 1987). Family-work conflict a source of pressure, and can cause problems with health, work performance, and so on. The married women working in public sector in Nigeria must combine work and family responsibilities. They experience pressure from conflicting roles. Participation in office work is more difficult because family and work responsibilities conflict, which tends to affect work performance and social interactions. In the public sectors, diverse information sources are available and can be used to alleviate work and social incompetence.

Objectives

The main objective of this study was to examine the workplace characteristics as determinants of work-life balance of women in the Nigerian Public Sector, other specific objectives include;
1. To determine the difference in work-life balance of women with supportive and unsupportive bosses in the Nigerian public sector.
2. To examine the difference in work-life balance of women working in departments where overtime is required and those working where it does not required.

Research Hypotheses
1. There is no significant difference in work-life balance of women with supportive and unsupportive bosses in the Nigerian public sector.
2. There is no significant difference in work-life balance of women working in departments where overtime is required and those working where it does not required.

Methods

Research Design

This descriptive study adopted a survey research design.

Sampling Techniques

A total of 886 women were randomly selected from three states in south west Nigeria-Lagos, Ogun and Oyo states. These participants were selected from three federal and state ministries- education, health and information. These three ministries were selected because they present at both federal and state levels.

Instruments

Work-life balance questionnaire was developed, standardised and used to collect data. There were 20 items on the questionnaire. The items included contractual arrangements, organisational work arrangements/supports that improve/deter work-life balance such as maternity, adoptive, force majeure, parental and career's leave and other non-statutory measures such as childcare and employee assistance schemes etc. Five ratings were used-agree strongly, agree, disagree, disagree strongly and don't know.

Results

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in work-life balance of women working with supportive and those with unsupportive bosses in the Nigerian public sector.

Table 1 Summary of Independent t-test work-life balance of women with supportive and unsupportive bosses in the Nigerian public sector.

Variation	N	df	Mean	Sd	t-observed	Sig. level
Women with supportive bosses	214	884	56.64	1.08	21.56*	<.05
Women with unsupportive bosses	672		26.48	1.12		

*significant

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The finding of this study reveals that there is a significant difference in work-life balance of women with supportive and unsupportive bosses in the Nigerian public sector at t=21.56, df =884 and <0.05 significant level. The means show that women with supportive bosses had better work-life balance than women with unsupportive bosses. This implies that the nature of the supportive roles of bosses matters in work-life balance of women Hypothesis one is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in work-life balance of women working in departments where overtime is required and those working where it does not required.

Table 2 Summary of Independent t-test work-life balance of women working in departments where overtime is required and those working where it does not required

Variation	N	df	Mean	Sd	t-observed	Sig. level
Women working where overtime is required	314	884	58.62	1.26	18.24*	<.05
Women working where overtime is not required	572		22.46	1.48		

*significant

The finding of this study reveals that there is a significant difference in work-life balance of women working in departments where overtime is required and those working where it does not required at t=18.24, df =884 and <0.05 significant level. The means show that women working in departments where overtime is required had better work-life balance than women working where overtime is not required. Hypothesis two is therefore rejected.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicated that the nature of the support the women employees received from their bosses matters in work-life balance. Changes in workplace flexibility and improved supervisor support for family, such as managers showing interest in an employee's personal life or caring about an employee's family needs, can benefit all parties involved (Kossek & Hammer, 2008). The ideal boss-employee relationship should be one of trust and respect where both individuals work as a team to achieve the goals of the organisation. However, it disheartening that only 24% of the participants reported having supportive bosses while 76% reported otherwise. This is worrisome in our public service establishment. The findings revealed that women undertaken overtime reported better work-life balance than those were not undertaken overtime. The negative outcomes of overtime were available in the literature. Overtime may cause some stress or fatigue, especially if it causes a time conflict between the job and other activities. It is possible that overtime causes people to devote less time to health promotion activities leading to health problems (Alexy, 1991). Earlier findings suggested that people with low salaries and high responsibilities worked more to make up for wages. The increase in income may be a motivation for overtime and be buffer for work-life conflict.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this present study revealed that many working women are facing work-life conflict because of hostile working environment which include unsupportive bosses. Women employees should be able to look forward to going to the office because they enjoy working there. A hostile work environment negatively affects the employee's work-life balance and performance. It results in dissatisfaction with the workplace and its underlying culture. This disgruntlement may cause employee performance to dip or worse, result in a good employee resigning from the company.

Recommendations

It is the government's duty to ensure it provides a safe and secure workplace to its employees. In not doing so, the government is potentially surrendering to negative factors that will cause its productivity takes a hit. The on-going public service reforms in Nigeria should consider the welfare of women and make available work-life policies which include flexible work scheduling, family leave policies allowing periods away from work for employees to take care of family matters, and childcare assistance.

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