
A Comparative Study of Work-Family Balance of Female Journalists and Nurses

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Abstract: *This study compared work-family balance of female journalists and nurses using variables of work-life balance. The field survey consisted of 300 participants.. The response rate was 292 (97.3%). For options like the provision of child care services, both groups had similar levels of agreement or satisfaction with the work-life balance options. For options like compressed work hours and self roastering the nurses seemed to have higher levels of agreement. For other like tele-working the journalists had higher levels of agreement. The disparities were highest for work-family balance options like teleworking (71.9%), compressed working hours (35.1%), and self- roistering (31.6%). Options like child care (2.2%), paid leave (10.8%), and breaks from work (11.7%). More of the female journalists 110(74.8%) than female nurses 96(53.9%) experience stress and stress related illnesses owing to their inability to balance work and personal lives suitably.*

Organization support for work-family balance must promote health, respect and care about its employees, know that employees especially women have family and personal duties and so offer flexibility. Assessments must be conducted regularly to recognize staff needs in work-family balancing and the outputs integrated into the human resource and staff work plans. Flexible work practices should provide greater flexibility, to create room for family and personal duties, without injury or negative consequences. Women can improve their work- family balance by making more time for the activities and people that matter most to them, building downtime into their schedules, dropping activities that sap time or energy, rethinking errands, making time for exercises irrespective of busy schedules to boost energy levels and ability to concentrate.

Keywords: *Comparative, Study, Work-Family, Balance, Female, Journalists, Nurses*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent times because of transformations in the regulations and policies in several nations work time plans have expanded to allow additional flexibility and individualized schedules. One of the factors that necessitated this tendency has been the increased involvement of women in the paid labour force. However, the degree and variety of flexibility desired by employers does not automatically align with that of the employees. Issues that have arisen include the results of different working time plans on the work-life balance of workers and their connotations for gender equality and gender equity policies.

Demographic transformations, involving an aging population and nuclear families, increase the probability of employees inclination towards flexible working plans. Amending work patterns present prospects for employees to handle home duties devoid of compromise to their work positions. Work-life balance - ahead of money, recognition, and autonomy - is now the key determinant for majority of men and women in regards to whether or not they have a successful career. As Messenger (2004) observes society is constantly evolving such that most families no longer rely on the male incomes alone. Females have become actively engaged in formal employment to augment family income and the type of work they undertake has impact on family life. Tracing the trend of the entry of women into the labour force in different European countries Lindsey (1997), discovered a general trend whereby women worked before marriage, left off working after marriage to care for their children, and later returned to work after their children have attained school age. The movement of women into the paid labour force has profoundly impacted other social institutions, particularly the family. Conflict in multiple roles' militates more against women. Oyekanmi (1990) notes that initially in Nigeria, educated women moved into teaching and other care oriented professions. However, from the

1930's, more women gradually entered into law, medicine, journalism, nursing and so on. Now educated women are found in virtually all professions.

It is however exceedingly difficult for a woman who works 40 hours a week outside the home to add another 40 or 50 inside. A husband's contribution to domestic work remains very small. Mba (2007) observes that some studies indicate a slight increase in time spent on household tasks by husbands, but wives assume the major responsibility, including that of child care or arranging for it. Olayanju (2005) reports that the same pattern has been reproduced in the last decade and as expected, wives are less satisfied when their husband's share of domestic labour is taken up by childcare and traditional male chores, perceiving the division of household labour as unjust. Women may be referred to occupationally as attorneys, physicians, or administrators, but the role of homemaker is still a salient one and persists for employed wives. Olayanju suggests that task sharing in two-earner families is also mediated by several other variables, such as the income contribution of each partner, the social class, ethnicity, the number and ages of children, and the couples' gender role ideology. Different subgroups of dual-earner families distribute tasks differently and show a greater involvement on the part of the husband. Oyekanmi (2005) states that while mothers of all social classes have more difficulty balancing work and family roles, professional couples have more control over how these roles can be balanced.

In contemporary Nigeria there are more women in the labour force, especially married women, and the highly educated are more committed to work and do not interrupt their careers after marriage as it used to be. The rising levels of female employment bring about changes in the structure and functions of the family group. Women who traditionally raised their children under their direct supervision are now faced with the necessity of having to go out to work in order to help in the support of the family. This has therefore resulted in the care of young children not taking place exclusively within the family group and there is a transfer of functions from the family to the larger society. Nigerian women, who were mostly engaged in socially acceptable employment like nursing, secretarial jobs etc. in the past are now diverted and actively participate in other professions like engineering, journalism and banking mainly because of better pay checks. These new occupations come with cultural and social changes that increase work-family imbalance. Morgan (2003) observes that majority of employees, especially the knowledge workers, are working harder and longer than ever before and so they find it difficult to achieve work family balance. Finding a suitable balance between work and daily living is a challenge that all workers face. Families are particularly affected. It is a challenge to governments because if parents cannot achieve their desired work- family balance, not only is their welfare lowered but so is development in the country.

A major gap identified for this study is the conflict between work and family life that has real consequences and significantly affects the quality of family life and career attainment. The consequences for women may include serious constraints on career choices, limited opportunity for career advancement and success in their work roles and the need to choose between two clear opposites; an active and satisfying career or marriage and children. This study examines disparities in work family balance among female journalists and nurses. It will determine the effect of hours of work on both female journalists and nurses and whether one group has better work family balance than the other.

2. LITERATURE

2.1. Work Family Balance

Work family balance is the proper prioritizing between work (career and ambition) on one hand and life (pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development) on the other. It does not imply equal balance in units of time between work and family but includes each individual's needs, experiences, and goals, and there is not a one size fits all solution. Work-family balance involves suitable functioning at work and at home and to achieve it, workers have to create support systems at home, at work, and in the community. It is a satisfactory level of involvement or 'fit' between the multiple roles in a person's life.

While there are variations in definitions and descriptions, work- family balance usually involves symmetry in the degree of time and effort dedicated to work and family activities, to retain a general logic of synchronization in life. Bird (2011) affirms that work-family balance is meaningful achievement and enjoyment in everyday life.

Delery and Doty (2006) asserts that competing and multi-faced demands between work and home tasks have received greater significance in recent years, due mainly to demographic and workplace changes like greater numbers of women in the workforce (dual-career couples), transformation in family structures, a growing reluctance to accept the longer hours culture, the rise of the 24 per 7 society, and technological advancements. Arising from these, organizations are under more demands to create diverse types of practices to assist employees' attempts at accomplishing work related and personal obligations. Attaining and improving work-family balance constitutes a central topic in human resource management and has received significant attention from all the stakeholders in industry. Human resource managers are giving greater consideration to the objectives and requirements of organization human resource and are guaranteeing improved social relations to allow them to realize their finest work potentials. Establishing appropriate employment practices to facilitate employees having more control of their working life can result in enhanced productivity, lower absenteeism and happier, less stressed out employees.

2.2. Work- Family Balance Practices

Work-family balance practices are conscious organizational programmes or culture aimed at reducing work-family conflicts and enabling employees to be more effective both at work and in other roles. Gradually, work-family balance practices are no longer seen exclusively as a way of helping employees with care giving responsibilities but as a method of identifying with their input to organizational performance. Organizations assist in employee work-family balance through work-family practices involving flexible working and reductions in working time or family-friendly policies. Organization efforts to support work-family balance result in lower employee turnover, greater pride in the organization and higher job satisfaction.

Organizations can employ diverse work-family balance plans to assist employee better balance their work and family roles, achieve progress in welfare and offer organizational advantages. Some of the options include: flexible working hours, job sharing, part-time work, compressed work weeks, parental leave, telecommuting, on-site child care facilities, provision of benefits ranging from extended health insurance for employees and their dependants, personal days, promoting fitness as well as physical and mental health, supporting children's education, participation in volunteer work, or easing gradual retirement.

The last couple of decades have witnessed remarkable transformations in Human Resource Management towards the use of strategy with the basic assurance that achieving semblance between human resource practices and strategies should guarantee organizations enjoying superior performance. Organizations employ work-family practices to increase participation of female human resources and make use of their capacities, to keep employees motivated and well performing, to make the organization more attractive to employees and to have better fulfillment of corporate social responsibility, engender employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment as well as reduced job stress and turnover intention.

There are several organizational outcomes and employer benefits of work-family balance practices. One is reduced costs particularly those related to reduced direct and indirect absenteeism costs, costs associated with the loss and replacement of valued employees and turnover. Another is increased productivity and employees' performance since work-family balance practices usually portend encouraging impact on productivity. Next is enhanced organizational image and retention of desirable employees which implies being well-positioned to attract and retain greater numbers of job applicants from which a larger pool of better qualified employees can be selected.

2.3. Hindrances to Work-Family Balance

Several obstacles militate against achieving organizational effectiveness through work-family balance. One is ignorance. Kodz et al, (2008) found that 50% of employees were ignorant of the family friendly practices accessible in their organizations suggesting that employees often stay oblivious of their work-life claims subsequent to the execution of work-family balance practices. Mordi and Ojo (2011) suggest lacks of information and training on work-family balance as hindrances. Their study found that most employees were unaware of the work-family balance policies in place in their organizations and were surprised to learn that their organizations had flexible work deals.

Another is the fear of career consequences. Eaton (2003) observes that offering work-family balance options enhances employees' commitment to the organization only to the extent that they feel free to utilize them devoid of harmful results (like injured occupation prospects) to their work lives. Many employees fail to employ the options due to fear of career derailment.

Next is Managerial support. Care must be taken to ensure that supervisors or manager do not send negative signals indicating that the use of flexible benefits is a problem for them. Where they passionately support the incorporation of paid work and other responsibilities, employees will be more likely to take up available work-family programmes.

There is also co-worker support. Sometimes workers who employ work-family balance options suffer negative perceptions from colleagues and superiors. Their levels of organizational commitment are often questioned and this impacts on future allotment of organizational rewards like promotion prospects and salary raises.

Moreover there is organizational time expectation. Long working hours is often acknowledged as an indication of commitment, productivity and motivation for advancement. Therefore to be recognized as making a significant contribution, productivity alone is often not enough but has to be joined with constant attendance at work. As Beauregard and Lesley (2008) opine, some organizations have "presenteeism" cultures where those who succeed are the ones who come in early and stay late as a matter of course. It is very difficult to implement flexible work arrangements in organizations where the focus is on hours rather than output, and presence rather than performance.

Furthermore there are genders perceptions. There are barriers to men's employment of work family balance options. Some organization cultures are suspicions of men's claims to family duties and the domestic organization in employees' own homes often excludes men from taking up available work-family options. A supportive work environment added to changes in attitudes and expectations are imperative in persuading more men to employ flexible work options.

3. METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire was designed to collect data associated with work-family balance concerns using several work-family balance options and constructs from literature. The reliability co-efficient of the instrument after the pilot survey was $r = 0.758$ Cronbach's alpha while Pearson correlation was 0.672 ($p < 0.001$) indicating that the instrument was reliable. The questionnaires were administered in a field survey consisting of 300 participants. 150 participants each were randomly selected from the National Union of Women Journalists and the National Association of Nigerian Nurses and Midwives in Lagos Nigeria. The response rate was 292 (97.3%) of which 147 (49%) were female journalists and 141 (47%) were female nurses.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. *Work-Life Balance Options*

Work-Family balance Options	Female Journalists 147 (50.3%)	Female Nurses 145 (49.7%)	Gap %
Breaks from work	83(56.5%)	99 (68.2%)	16(11.7%)
Compressed Working Hours	76(51.7%)	126 (86.8%)	50(35.1%)
Self-Roastering	64(43.5%)	109(75.1%)	45(31.6%)
Tele-working	125(85%)	19(13.1%)	106(71.9%)
Child Care	84(57.1%)	86(59.3%)	2(2.2%)
Flexi-time	112(76.1%)	67(46.3%)	45(29.8%)
Paid Leave	123(83.6%)	137(94.4%)	14(10.8%)

The study analysed the perceptions and evaluations of female journalists and nurses of specific work-family balance options. The results by and large indicate that most of the respondents do not give highly positive ratings. For instance, only 34.2% of them indicated that they enjoy good organization support and have a good work-life balance. However, work-life balance options like paid leave had more positive assessments. As regards gaps, for some of the options like the provision of child care services, both groups had similar levels of agreement or satisfaction with the work-life balance options. For options like compressed work hours and self roastering the nurses seemed to have higher levels of agreement. However, for other indicators such as: tele-working the journalists had higher levels of agreement. Valcour and Hunter (2005) notes however that while home working can lead to

greater flexibility and independence; it can make people work for longer periods of time, including weekends and evenings. Home working could be stressful, especially where young children have to be managed. The disparities were highest for work-family balance options like tele-working (71.9%), compressed working hours (35.1%), and self-roistering (31.6%). Options like child care (2.2%), paid leave (10.8%), and breaks from work (11.7%).

The study found that more of the female journalists 110(74.8%) than female nurses 96(53.9%) experience stress and stress related illnesses owing to their inability to balance work and personal lives suitably. Because the female journalists find themselves in a male dominated profession, they experience greater pressure to work hard to prove themselves in the workplace. The female journalists identified factors like the pressure of deadlines to be met and decisions to be made, a lack of cooperation and problems with male colleagues, the children who have to be picked up from school, a tense relationship at home, plus a high consumption of unhealthy food choices picked up in a rush on the way home from a busy day, as contributors to the reasons they suffer from stress and stress related illnesses. The study also found that work time of female journalists is often longer and less predictable than that of female nurses. A growing aspiration to balance work with other aspects of life and not to be tagged as weak can doubtless be linked to the long hours that most female journalists devote to work. The distribution of tasks within the family is still influenced by gender roles: men are more likely to spend more hours in paid work, while women spend longer hours in unpaid domestic work, a situation that makes working for longer hours more stressful for women. Some organizations contribute to this by encouraging long hour cultures, to the extent that a considerably higher proportion of journalists work more than 48 hours weekly. This culture is partly perceived to be the result of downsizing and the more demanding workloads with which those who remain in employment must contend.

278(95.2%) of the total respondents comprising of 138(93.9%) of the female journalists and 140(99.3%) of the female nurses affirm that they do not have the right balance between work and family. 253(83.3%) of the total respondents comprising of 132(89.7%) of the female journalists and 121(85.8%) of the female nurses admit that they spend more hours than they would like at work and do not spend as much time as they like with loved ones. They also do not get enough sleep, exercise and healthy food as a result of hours spent at work but they continue to do the job because of fear of the financial consequences of leaving. 203(69.5%) of the total respondents comprising of 116(78.9%) of the female journalists and 94(66.7%) of the female nurses find themselves mostly thinking about work instead of focusing on home and pleasure activities and often give up activities they enjoy for work activities. While most of the respondents are quite excited about their work and family lives they feel they are not living ideal lives and this negatively affects their emotional attachment to their work.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends affirmative work-life balance consideration which implies managing employees as adults with the need to balance their job obligations with family and individual duties, and be constructive about observing amendments to produce greater organization flexibility in all areas of employee relations. Top management must model best practice work life balance. Organizations must have plain policy statements on work-life balance integrated into core values statements and corporate plans, supported by policy guidelines delineating the implications for all organization members.

Organizations supporting work-family balance must promote health, respect and care about its employees, know that employees especially women have family and personal duties and so offer flexibility. Greater awareness should be created of available work-family balance options. Moreover, assessments must be conducted regularly to recognize staff needs in work-family balancing, flexible work options, and suitability of current working arrangements and the outputs integrated into the human resource and staff work plans. Flexible work practices should provide greater flexibility to all categories of employees, to create room for their family and personal duties, without injury or negative consequences. Women should endeavour to increase their levels of work-family balance by making more time for the activities and people that matter most to them, building downtime into their schedules, dropping activities that sap time or energy, rethink errands, make time for exercise even in spite of jam-packed schedules so as to boost energy levels and ability to concentrate and finally to remember that a little relaxation goes a long way.

6. CONCLUSION

Globally, dual-career employees especially women are confronted by the dilemma of work-life conflict. This study identifies work-life balance options, as experienced by workers and assessed the perceptions and experiences of work-life balance among female journalists and nurses. Organizations must assist employees especially women in improving and maintaining good work-life balance. Work life balance has the potential to significantly increase employee morale, decrease absenteeism, and retain organizational knowledge. In contemporary global marketplace, where organizations seek to reduce costs, the onus is on the human resource professionals to recognize the crucial concerns of work-life balance and defend work-life agendas. Irrespective of the category of employees (single mothers, employees who value their personal time or dual-career couples) work life balance offers a win-win situation for both employers and employees. Therefore there must be more organization commitment to investing in human resources who contribute significantly to sustained organization performance. To achieve competitive advantage in the marketplace organizations must be concerned about their human resources who are their most important assets and take consistent and steadfast measures to improve their work- life and employ high-quality work-life balance options.

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