A MULTIVARIATE STUDY OF THE THREE FORMS OF WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AMONG NIGERIAN MALE AND FEMALE WORKERS

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Abstract

The study investigated the impact of gender on time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based work-family conflict (WFC). Seven hundred and thirty six volunteered married male (n =425) and female (n=311) Federal university workers, drawn from three selected Nigerian Federal institutions, participated in the study. Carlson, Kacmar and Williams’ WFC Scale was used to measure the three forms of WFC. A multivariate analysis of variance was computed to test the effect of gender on time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based work-family conflict. Results revealed that male and female Nigerian employees differed only on strain-based work-family conflict. The result was discussed with reference to the multiple roles played by Nigerian women in combining the roles of mother, wife and employees which tend to sap enormous energy and thus resulting in the experience of more strain-based WFC than their male counterparts.

Keywords: Gender, Time-based, Strain-based, Behaviour-based, Work-family conflict

1. Introduction

The influx of women into the labour force since 1980 and the corresponding changes in gender role expectations and family life have made the study of gender in relation to work-family issues the subject of substantial attention in the work/family literature (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005). Consequently, gender differences in work and family issues have consistently emerged in work-family research (Eby et al., 2005). It is however, interesting to note that although the boost to work and family research has come from the increasing presence of women in the workforce, few studies have specifically
focused on work-family and gender (Paraswaman, & Greehaus, 2002). Most of the existing studies are based on data from the Western countries (e.g., Byron, 2005; Frone, 2003) and they have predominantly looked at gender and the directions or the overall WFC. Few have examined gender in relation to the three dimensions (time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based WFC) of WFC. Thus, carrying out a study with data from a developing economy such as Nigeria promises to offer some insights into the impact of the three dimensions of WFC on male and female workers across cultures.

In Nigeria, labor is divided along gender lines. Traditionally, Men work to make money and provide for their families, while women took care of the household responsibilities and accomplished the tasks of raising the children. Hence, an average Nigerian woman is seen as a complete housewife. Her primary responsibility is that of producing and nurturing children. According to Singh, Simpson, Mordi and Okafor (2011) Nigerian women marry young, and they spend over 74% of their productive life in marriage. They produce and nurture an average of 6.3 children each (Singh, et al., 2011). Even women who have demanding careers invest more hours in home activities than do their male colleagues (Turtoe-Sanders, 1998; Cinamon, & Rich, 2002).

However, in the last two decades, there has been a progressive increase in the number of Nigerian women who are involved in paid jobs as a result of Nigerian’s economic down turn in the early 1990s and industrialization which has also increased the number of dual-earner families in Nigeria. Increasing numbers of women are becoming involved in the professional workforce, but they are greatly outnumbered by their male counterparts (Central Intelligent Agency, 2000).

In addition, although the work situation in Nigeria has changed, most workplaces are still guided by traditional work policies that were fashionable when only fathers used to work and the mothers stay at home to take care of the home and the children (Hammed, 2008). According to Hammed, such traditional work arrangement is not consistent with the reality of the present day diverse workplace that is increasingly populated with mothers, single parents and dual-career couples. As a result, the potential for the time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based WFC
seems to be on the increase as most married Nigerian employees struggle with the challenges of balancing the demands of paid work and family responsibilities.

In the light of this tremendous increase in the number of dual-earners in the contemporary Nigerian society and the corresponding change in the gender role expectations and family life, it has become necessary to further examine the role of gender in work-family conflict in a developing economy such as Nigeria. The present study specifically investigated the following question: Will there be any significant gender difference in the experience of time, strain, and behaviour-based WFC of Nigerian employees?

1.1 Work-family conflict and its outcomes

Work-family conflict (WFC) has been referred to as the inter role conflict which occurs between employees’ work and family roles, such that the demands of their work roles interfere with the fulfillment of their family roles (Greenhaus, & Beutell, 1985). Researchers (e.g. Brough, & O’Driscoll, 2005; Kinman, & Jones, 2005) have demonstrated that the experience of such conflict is stressful for many employees and is associated with emotional responses such as anxiety, tension, discontentment, confusion and frustration. In addition, the experience of WFC, for many employees, has been shown to result in increases in role strain, absenteeism, and turnover, and decrease in health, psychological well-being, job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Amazue, & Uzoka, 2009; Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Baedeaux, & Brinley, 2005).

The construct WFC is one of the most researched work-family variables (Parasuraman, & Greenhaus, 2002). Research over the past several decades has convincingly demonstrated that work and family lives are often interdependent, sometimes positively, and sometimes negatively and that these interdependencies flow in both directions from work to family, work interfering with family and from family to work, family interfering with work (Frone, 2003). Work interfering with family occurs when demands and obligation of work are deleterious to family life, while family interfering with work, on the other hand, arises when family obligation disturbs one’s work (Frone, Yardely, & Markel, 1997).
Furthermore, Carlson, Kacmar and Williams (2000) distinguished three forms of work-family conflict namely; time-based conflict, strain-based conflict and behaviour-based conflict. In line with Greenhaus and Beutell’s (1985) definition, time-based conflict may occur when time devoted to one role makes it difficult to participate in another role. Strain-based conflicts suggests that strain experienced in one role spills over into another role and interferes with participation in that role. Behaviour-based conflict, on the other hand, occurs when specific behaviours required in one role are incompatible with behaviour expectation in another role.

1.2 Theoretical review

Work-family conflict has typically been explained from the demands and resources model which argue that the structural, social and psychological demands from work and family contribute to high levels of work-family conflict. These models argue that the inherent demands of work or family life deplete personal resources such as time and physical or mental energy, thereby leaving individuals with insufficient resources to attend to activities in other domains (Goode, 1960; Hobfoll, 1989). In relation to work-family conflict, role conflict is defined as, “simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other” (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snock, & Rosenthal, 1964, p.19). In the context of the interface between work and family, the two competing demands are generated from work and family domains. Hence, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined work-family conflict as “a form of inter role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (p.77). In other words, multiple roles lead to personal conflict (inter role) as it becomes more difficult to perform each role successfully, due to conflicting demands on time, energy, or incompatible behaviours among roles (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1986; Kahn et al., 1964).

Studies have shown that employed women generally face more demands (from paid work, child care, and housework) than employed men (Robinson, & Godbey, 1997). The degree of this difference for women is made up by housework. Hochschild (1989) reported that employed mothers work an extra month per year of 24 hour days when compared with employed fathers with their number of hours
Housework is divided along gender lines. Thus, there are tasks that women are expected to perform and others that are generally men’s expected responsibility. For instance, women cook, clean, and care for children, while men usually take care of home repairs and lawn maintenance, (Robinson & Godbey, 1997). In this regard “male” activities are more flexible while “female” responsibilities are often necessary to do every day. Therefore men do their tasks as leisure-like and discretionary activities (Larson, Richards, & Perry-Jenkins, 1994; Shaw, 1988). Greenhaus and Beutell, (1985), and many scholars have hypothesized that women experience more work-family conflict than men because of their typically greater home responsibilities and their allocation of more importance to family roles. However, some researchers (e.g., Byron, 2005) have discovered that men and women do not differ on their level of WFC.

1.3 Gender and WFC

Research on gender differences in WFC has produced extremely contradictory findings (Voydanoff, 2002). While some studies have reported that men experience more WFC than women (e.g., Duxbury, & Higgins, 1991; Yang, Chen, Choi, & Zhou, 2000), others have reported that women experience more WFC than men (e.g. Carlson et al., 2000). Some other studies have produced mixed results even within the same study. For instance, some studies found that women experienced more WFC than men, even when working identical number of hours (Gutek, et al., 1991). Other studies found that women experience greater levels of family interference with work (e.g. Fu, & Shaffer, 2001). Some other studies found that women reported both more work interference with family and family interference with work than men (e.g., Duxbury, et al., 1994). A meta-analysis of 61 published studies shows that there were no overall mean gender differences in either work interference with family or family interference with work (Byron, 2005).
Furthermore, gender has been specifically examined in relation to the three forms (time, strain and behaviour-based) of WFC. Loerch, Russell and Rush (1989) investigated the family-related antecedents of time, strain and behaviour-based WFC, and found some gender differences. According to Loerch et al. family conflict was a significant predictor of strain-based and behaviour-based conflict for both genders and a unique predictor of time-based conflict for men but not women. Wallace (1999) studied time-and strain-based conflict among male and female lawyers and found some similarities and differences across genders. According to Wallace, work involvement variables were not predictive of either type of conflict among women, although higher work motivation and working more hours were associated with men’s strain and time-based conflict, respectively. Wallace (1999) further found that work overload and being in a profit-driven environment had similar negative effects on men and women’s time-based work-family conflict. In terms of strain-based conflict, Wallace reported that a profit-driven environment was associated with conflict only for men whereas work overload predicted conflict for both genders, with its effect stronger for women.

Overall, research from around the world (e.g., Behson, 2002; Byron, 2005; Frone, 2003; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Nielson, Carlson, & Lankau, 2001) has provided no conclusive evidence that sex of the employee affects WFC, rather it has provided mix evidence as to whether men and women report different levels and forms of WFC (Eby et al., 2005). More so, few studies have examined the dimensions of WFC in relation to gender. Thus, the present study provided additional information to fill this gap by looking at how male and female Nigerian employees differ in the three forms of WFC. It is therefore hypothesized that male and female Nigerian employees will differ in their experience of time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based WFC.

2. Method

2.1 Participants and procedure

A total of 736 ($n = 736$) working mothers and fathers from Federal tertiary institutions in South-Eastern Nigeria participated in the study. The participants consisted of 425 male and 311 female administrative employees drawn from three
Federal universities (i.e. University of Nigeria Nsukka and Enugu campuses, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka and Federal University of Technology Owerri) across Eastern Nigeria. The distribution of the participants in the Federal universities studied was 260, 242 and 234. The age of the respondents ranged from 32 years to 55 years with a mean age of 43.5 years. Participants’ minimum educational qualification was Ordinary National Certificate of Education (OND). The respondents’ job positions ranged from junior executive officers to senior administrative officers. All the respondents belonged to the administrative category in the Nigerian Federal university system. The participants were literate enough to understand the items in the questionnaire. A total of 838 copies of WFC scale were distributed to volunteers in the three selected Federal institutions in South-East Nigeria. Participants were ensured of the confidentiality of their responses and were told that the results will be reported at an aggregate level. The scale has specific instructions on how to respond to the items. A total of 736 copies were completed and returned representing a return rate of 93.79 per cent. All the participants volunteered to participate in the study.

2.2 Measures

Work-Family Conflict Scale: Carlson, Kacmar and Williams’ (2000) 18-item work-family conflict scale was used to assess the three forms of WFC of the participants. This scale consists of six subscales (3 items each in the two directions of WFC, namely; work interfering with family (WIF) and family interfering with work (FIW)), measuring time-based, strain-based, and behaviour-based conflict for both work interference with family and family interference with work. This scale is measured on the basis of time-based, strain-based and behavior-based components of WFC. Each of the dimensions was measured by combining the items in the directions of work interference with family and family interference with work. Thus participants’ index of time-based WFC for instance is derived by adding up all the items on time-based WFC for the two directions of WFC. Carlson, Kacmar and Williams (2000) scale was designed in a 5-point Likert-type response format, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Higher scores on each scale indicate higher levels of WFC. Sample items are “My work keeps me from my
family activities more than I would like” (time-based WFC); “When I get home from work I am often extremely tired to participate in family activities” (strain-based WFC) and “The problem-solving behaviours I use in my job are not effective in resolving problems at home” (behaviour-based WFC). This scale was developed using rigorous psychometric procedure (Herst, & Brannick, 2004). For the purpose of the present study, the researcher revalidated the WFC scale using Nigerian samples. This became necessary because previous validations of the instrument were done with Western samples and none was done with Nigerian samples. The result of the item analysis revealed that the items have an internal consistency of alpha .87 and a Spearman corrected split-half reliability index of .56. The result of the item analysis further showed coefficient alpha of .82, .77, and .83 for time-based, strain-based and behavior-based WFC respectively.

2.3 Design/Statistics

The research was a cross-sectional survey design and a Multivariate Analysis of variance was used to analyze the data.

3. Results

Table 1 below show that there were slight mean differences between male and female employees in their experience of time-based and behaviour-based WFC. This indicates that male Nigerian employees reported slightly higher time-based WFC than female employees. Female employees reported slightly higher behaviour-based WFC than male employees. The table further showed that female employees reported higher strain-based WFC than their male counterpart. This result indicates that female workers experienced higher strain-based WFC than the male workers.

Table 2 below showed that male and female Nigerian employees did not differ on time-based and behaviour-based WFC. However, male and female Nigerian employees differed on strain-based work-family conflict F (1,734) = 5.90, P<.01). This indicates that male and female Nigerian workers experience different levels of strain-based WFC to the effect that female employees experience more strain-based WFC than male employees.
4. Discussion

The result showed that gender differed only on strain-based WFC. Nigerian men and women employees appear to experience the same level of time-based and behavior-based WFC. The present study seems to suggest that the time pressure from either work or family does not influence the experience of WFC for both male and female Nigerian employees. According to Wallace (1999) work context is an important factor in the experience of time-based WFC. Wallace suggested that work overload and being in a profit-driven environment had negative effects on men and women’s time-based WFC. It is therefore possible that because work schedules are well defined in the Nigerian Federal universities, the administrative workers do not seem to experience time pressures which may spill over to the family domain and consequently lead to time-based WFC. Furthermore, the university administrative work is not profit-driven, but a routine work schedules with less workload and pressures. This may explain why male and female workers experienced the same level of time-based WFC.

Similarly, results showed no significant difference in behaviour-based WFC among Nigerian Federal university workers. This may be attributed to the work policies and procedures that exist in their work environment. The work policies and procedures in the Nigerian Federal universities are relatively worker-friendly and seem not to require strict procedures concerning how employees should behave. Thus, there may be little or no differences in the behaviours required in such places of work and that which is also required within the family domain.

The results further showed that male and female employees differed in strain-based WFC. The table of means and standard deviation showed that women scored higher than men in strain-based WFC. This finding is consistent with some other studies on gender differences in WFC (Behson, 2000; Frone, et al., 1992; Wallace, 1999). Women have been said to give more attention to family activities and are required to put longer hours to meet the expectations of the family role (Desai, 1996), thus causing higher levels of stress for them when compared with men.
This finding is explained from the point of the multiple roles played by women especially in dual-earner marriages. Women have been shown to perform more multiple roles than men. For instance, women traditionally play the role of the caregiver. In this era of increased participation of women in the world of work one also finds women combining their role of caregiver with that of their work roles. Thus women often find themselves compelled to fulfill a number of roles (mother, spouse and worker) at home and at work to the highest Simultaneous occurrence of two or more sets of role expectations may necessitate responses and tasks that may be competing or antagonistic so that compliance with one would make compliance with the other more difficult. It is possible therefore that the strain which women experience in the participation of family responsibilities (child care to parents’ care) spill over to work domain or vice versa. According to Hammed (2008), Nigerian women experience strain as they struggle to balance the multiple competing demands on their time and energy. This strain or conflict often occurs as the Nigerian women employees try to meet the needs of their spouses, children, elderly parents, community and employers. This situation may be responsible for the greater strain-based WFC that Nigerian women employees reported above their male counterparts.

In line with the demand and resources model, the resources (i.e. time, energy) of an individual is limited and multiple roles, as performed by the female employees, inevitably reduce the resources available for them to meet all role demands, thus leading to role conflict, which subsequently may cause strain and may increase the prevalence of psychological and physical exhaustion (Hobfoll, 1989). The inherent demands of their work and family deplete their personal resources as time and physical or mental energy, thereby leaving the individuals with insufficient resources to attend to activities in other domains (Goode, 1960). This finding is consistent with some earlier studies that suggest that women experience more WFC because they pay more attention to family activities and spend longer time attending to family issues (Robinson & Godbey, 1997). This situation is very peculiar to the Nigerian women who in addition to the work pressures continues with the family responsibilities and at the end become
emotionally drained. They probably have little or no time for leisure. Women have more difficulty relaxing after work and hence report greater stress in both their work and non work lives than men (Parasuraman, & Simmers, 2001).

4.1 Study implications

This finding draws attention to the need for work-family integration especially among Nigerian employees. The absence of institutional support for balancing work and family demands, such as quality assisted-living facilities and day care facilities, could also increase family demands on employees thereby increasing their conflict. Nigerian organizations, particularly Federal universities must acknowledge that the outdated ideal worker model no longer matches the experiences of Nigerian employees who try to juggle multiple roles.

In addition, policies that will help to better integrate work and family roles like, child care and infant care, should be implemented. Women and men in Nigerian work organizations may better integrate their work and family roles if organizations provide work-family support policies and practices. In Nigeria some public policies are available to support work-family integration, but there are inconsistencies in the availability of such supports as paid maternity leave and benefits and a high quality child care (Epie, 2010). More so, the present study advocates for the modification of duties (e.g. institutionalizing family-friendly and time flexible policies and practices) in ways that will also allow workers to obtain relief from service obligation. If these are implemented they will help to reduce stress and strain-based WFC in Nigerian employees.

5. Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship between time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based conflicts and the experience of WFC among Nigerian male and female workers. The findings of the study indicate that Nigerian male and female employees differed only on strain-based WFC. This finding has been explained from the point of the multiple roles played by Nigerian women especially in dual-earner marriages. Although the finding of this study has not resolved the gender controversy in balancing the demands of work and family roles, it has provided additional information in the understanding of gender and work/family
issues from different cultural context other than the Western culture. Recent research indicates that employees’ satisfaction with family-friendly work-place policies and a workplace culture that supports balance are major factors that reduce role overload and work interference with family (Duxbury & Higgins, 2005; Epie, 2010). As noted earlier, the work situations in Nigeria do not reflect the rapid changes that have taken place in the past two decades. Most workplaces are still guided by traditional work policies that were fashionable when only fathers used to work and the mothers stay at home to take care of the home and the children (Hammed, 2008). It is therefore concluded that Nigerian organizations, especially government institutions should, as a matter of urgency, put in place relevant work-family policies and work cultures that will assist female and male employees in integrating and balancing their work and family responsibilities.
References


Table 1: Table of Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) for the different levels of gender on the levels of WFC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Time-based</th>
<th>Strain-based</th>
<th>Behaviour-based</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16.24</td>
<td>14.35</td>
<td>15.57</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15.91</td>
<td>15.23</td>
<td>15.64</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total=736

Table 2: MANOVA summary table of between subject effects of gender on the levels of WFC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Levels of WFC</th>
<th>Sum of Square</th>
<th>Degree of Freedom (df)</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Time-based</td>
<td>19.283</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.768#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strain-based</td>
<td>138.818</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.900*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behaviour- Based</td>
<td>.702</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.023#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>Time-based</td>
<td>18430.477</td>
<td>734</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strain-based</td>
<td>17270.400</td>
<td>734</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behaviour- Based</td>
<td>21997.857</td>
<td>734</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>Time-based</td>
<td>18449.760</td>
<td>735</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strain-based</td>
<td>17409.217</td>
<td>735</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behaviour- Based</td>
<td>21998.560</td>
<td>735</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P<.01, #= Not significant