CONTENTS

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CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

AN EXAMINATION OF WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AMONG WOMEN

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Introduction

The status of Nigerian women has stepped up beyond the confines of motherhood through the vehicle of education. Women are no longer confined to their traditional gender roles of domesticity and nurturing. Thus, there is the emergence of informed motherhood with less superstitions, awareness of better hygiene and nutrition with high value for education, which may have enhanced the quality of life in the family and the society at large. Women are no longer busy with home chores alone, but are also engaged in one career or the other as many women have acquired the necessary educational qualifications needed for employment. A good number of women are playing more active roles in their careers and at the same time, making necessary efforts to raise their children properly. Davis & Robinson (1988) confirmed that the presence of many women in the workplace has been accompanied by changes in their status, (resulting from increased education, higher occupations and income) and especially greater relative contribution to the overall family income. The participation of women in work and family domains indicates their willingness in managing multiple roles with incompatible demands. These roles tend to drain them and cause stress or inter-role conflict. Thus, women may experience conflict between work and family domains. Again, it is imperative to note that oftentimes, many women experience some challenges while trying to balance their expectations as career women, wives and mothers. When they are not able to strike the expected work-family balance, it could lead to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, short temperedness, impatience and other symptoms associated with stress. Therefore, there is need to examine the women dimension of work-family conflict because it is important for organizations, individuals and society at large since it is associated with increased absenteeism, low turnover, poor performance with attendant psycho-social and mental health issues.

Women dimension of work-family conflict

The acquisition of formal education may have made some women to have professional advancement and seem able to combine a full-time career and family despite the fact that the pressure of the dual-role conflict of being a mother and a professional may have been seen to have negative influence on the child rearing roles and the society in general (Anyama, 2012). Work-family conflict is a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect (Greenhaus & Beutell,1985). Today's women now pursue professions previously dominated by men alone. Yet, when combining career and parenting, women may find it difficult because of the dual role conflict of being a mother and a professional which requires them to perform diverse social roles that demand incompatible behaviours (Chassin, Zeiss, Cooper & Reaven, 1985). Working women may have the desire to reach the apex of their careers but child rearing from infancy through childhood and adolescence needs a lot of hard work which tends to be difficult. Therefore, balancing work and family roles can result in work-family conflict.

The feeling of working women tends to conflict between personal achievements in their careers and nurturing the development of others; they may feel guilty for leaving their children while they work and also not giving their spouses adequate attention due to the premium society has placed on their traditional gender roles as mothers and wives. Women employees feel guilty that they were unable to fulfill traditional maternal roles. This is the ideal gender role across Nigerian culture that places great

importance on the family role over non-family roles. Gender role issues underline the finding that women have the primary responsibility for childcare and household tasks. This not only increases their stress but also reduces their job satisfaction. Furthermore, women are much more prone than men to adjust their work in order to satisfy family demands. The working women may face higher stress-levels both at home and at work, which in some cases may be expressed in form of anger, hatred and sadness thereby making them to have negative thought towards family relations and co-workers and in most cases may affect their productivity, relationship with their spouses and personal growth. The struggle between giving to others and doing for oneself lives inside of them and can potentially cause inner conflict as well as personal growth (Miller, 1976; Lerner, 1991). De Marneffe (2004) noted that, despite access to education and professional achievement, the integration of family and career roles remains problematic for women, thus, high-achieving women continue to face a conflict between career and family.

Moreover, the present socio-economic situation in Nigeria has made it imperative that the women should work but the conflict between the dual roles of motherhood and professionalism might have led some women to trade off their career for more time with their children, which is opting to "stay-at-home" instead of pursuing their career.

Rubin and Wooten (2007) identified some of the reasons that make educated mothers choose to stay at home as: Concern about finding affordable high-quality childcare, unsatisfying career path, the need to support a partner with a higher-earning potential, inability to find suitable employment, religious values that support a commitment to home and family, the desire to bring balance to a hectic family life and career. Although these educated stay-at-home mothers desire to live happy lives by giving their families the best, most of them seem to go through a lot of conflicts such as low self-esteem, seeming loss of identity, lack of effective family relationship among others thereby reducing their level of commitment to the family. Some researchers agree that lack of societal approval and support, greater feelings of loneliness, boredom, emotional difficulties with fear of losing the skills and marketability that they had worked very hard to achieve, feeling of shame for not living up to their potentials, guilt for not working and making use of their education and skills, negative maternal mental health, isolation, higher maternal depressive symptoms, vulnerability in relation to financial dependency, loss in terms of identity, self-esteem and external validation were some of the effects of staying at home by these women which can cause both social and emotional conflicts as well as lack of personal growth, thus, affecting their levels of family commitment (Elvin-Nowak, 1999; Zimmerman, 2000; Desimone 2001; Des Rivieres-Pigeon, Seguin, Goulet, & Descarries, 2001; Seagrum & Daniluk, 2002; Makri-botsari 2003; De Marneffe 2004; Rubin & Wooten, 2007).

It is also presumed that short temperedness, impatience and other symptoms associated with stress are common observable features experienced by working women. It is necessary to note that the conflicts arising from striking the expected work-family balance always tend to increase the helplessness of most working women. The consequences of work-family conflict on women bring about conflict between commitment to child-rearing, marital role-taking and ambiguity and uncertainty about professional roles with increased absenteeism, low turnover, poor performance with attendant psycho-social and mental health issues.

Types of Work-Family Conflict
Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) identified three major types of work-family conflict namely:
(a) Time-based conflict

(b) Strain-based conflict

(c) Behaviour-based conflict.

Individuals would experience incompatibilities between work and family in the form of time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based conflict.

Time-Based Conflict: The ascendancy of conflict between work and family domains is entrenched in scarcity theory, where personal resources such as time, energy, and attention are deemed to be finite, and that exertion of greater resources in one domain (work) inevitably results in reducing the amount of resources left for the other domain (family) (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Powell, 2003). Competing demands for time is one of the most commonly cited interferences between work and family domains. (Staines and O'Connor, 1980). Time-based conflict manifests where it is physically impossible to satisfy time demands of one role due to time pressures involved with another role and where one is mentally preoccupied with one domain despite being physically present and attempting to meet the demands of another (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985).

Strain-Based Conflict: Research on inter-role conflict indicates that excessive demands from one role inhibits the performance of the other role by creating strain for the individual in the form of dissatisfaction, tension, anxiety, and fatigue (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). In reviewing Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) explanation of strain-based conflict, Edwards and Rothbard (2000) emphasise the depletion of personal resources as a result of physical and psychological strain, which in turn is needed for role performance. Therefore, strain-based conflict does not insinuate competing demands per se but, rather, a situation in which participation in one domain resulting in either physical or psychological strain that hinders role performance in the other domain (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). In a later study conducted by the same authors it was found that individuals invested greater amounts of time in painful /dissatisfying role domains to overcome unpleasant experiences (Rothbard & Edwards, 2003). A negative psychological strain had thus resulted in extensive time involvement in one domain reducing the amount of time available for role performance in the other potentially satisfying domain resulting in conflict. Therefore, competing time demands can produce both strain-based as well as time-based conflict. Despite being conceptually distinct, both time-based and strain-based conflicts are found to share a number of sources within the work and family domains (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Behaviour-Based Conflict: When certain patterns of in-role behaviour become incompatible with expectations regarding behaviour in another role, behaviour-based conflict is said to occur (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). For example, an aggressive, confrontational and assertive approach to problem solving desired in a work setting might be inappropriate in a family setting where a warm, nurturing and collaborative approach is more desired (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Similar to strain-based conflict, behaviour-based conflict depicts a 'negative spillover' from one domain to another where behaviour desired and developed in one domain influences behaviour in the other domain whilst simultaneously inhibiting role performance in that latter domain (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Consistent with strain-based conflict, behaviour-based conflict need not require opposing role demands, rather interference of behaviour developed in one domain with the other.

Causes of work-family conflict among women

Workplace characteristics: Workplace characteristics can also contribute to higher levels of work-family conflict among women such as the number of hours worked outside the home, the level of control one has over one's work hours, flexible or inflexible work hours. 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 inhospitable organizational culture increase the likelihood that women employees will experience conflict between their work and family role (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Galinsky, Bond and Friedman, 1996). Work-family conflict can be caused by work overload, lack of control within the job setting, criteria for measuring accomplishment, feedback and social support from co-workers and supervisors, ambiguity and uncertainty about professional role. Higher status women employees are likely to work long hours and to be highly engaged in their work circumstances that may increase work-family conflict and reduce work-family fit. An unexpected meeting late in the day may prevent a woman from picking up his or her child from school. (Greenhaus & Buetell, 1985; Hammer & Thompson, 2003).

Size of family and ages of children: These variables may cause work-family conflict among women because mothers with small children are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Women whose children's age ranged from 0-2 years significantly have higher maternal conflict than those whose children's age ranged 10 years and above (Anyama, 2011). Thus, the age of the children is related to more work-family conflict among married women employees. Chassin, Zeirs and Cooper (1985) found that women with pre-school children experience different types of conflicts.

Level of social support: The level of social support impact the experience of work-family conflict among women. Dual role demands and expectation from working women by husbands was significantly related to high WFC and FWC among the working women in the present study. According to Sharma (1999) noted the support and involvement of husband positively relates to lower levels of role conflict experienced by the married working women.

Workaholism: Workaholism represents a compulsive need to work excessively which unsurprisingly tends to provoke burnout and impair wellbeing (Burke, 2008). Many studies have shown that workaholism is associated with burnout, represented by exhaustion, depersonalization, and limited feelings of accomplishment (Andreassen, Ursin, & Eriksen, 2007; Burke, 2008).

Consequences of work-family conflict among women

Work-family conflict seem to have negative consequences on women who rather than following a transitional sequence from one role to another are required to perform an accumulation of disparate roles simultaneously, each one with its unique pressures which adversely affect their output and child rearing roles thereby affecting their mental health and psycho-social well-being. The process of balancing work in the office and at home mean irregular work hours for professional married working women leading to physical and psychological problems. Work-family conflict is related to a number of negative job attitudes and consequences including lower overall job satisfaction and greater propensity to leave a position (Boles and Babin, 1996).

It is more likely to exert its negative influences in the home domain, resulting in lower life satisfaction and greater internal conflict within the family unit. (Greenhaus & Buetell, 1985)

Some researchers agree that lack of societal approval and support, greater feelings of emotional difficulties with fear of losing the skills and marketability that they had worked for, guilt for not striking the expected work balance, negative maternal mental health, higher maternal depressive symptoms, vulnerability in relation to financial dependency, loss of identity and external validation were some of the effects work-family conflict which can cause both social and emotional conflicts as well as lack of

personal growth thereby affecting their self-esteem (Elvin-Nowak, 1999; Zimmerman, 2000; Desimone 2001; Des Rivieres-Pigeon, Seguin, Goulet, & Descarries, 2001; Seagrum & Daniluk, 2002; Makri-botsari 2003; De Marneffe 2004; Rubin & Wooten, 2007).

However, multiple roles have also been found to cause a variety of adverse effects on women's mental and physical health, including loss of appetite, insomnia, overindulgence, and back pains. Conflict between work and family is associated with increased absenteeism, decreased turnover, decreased performance, and poorer physical and mental health (Rubin & Wooten, 2007). Work-to-family conflict is linked to job dissatisfaction, turnover intention and stress, while family-to-work conflict is correlated to absenteeism and stress (Grzywacz, Arcury, Marin, Carrillo, Burke Coates and Quandt, 2007; Aluko, 2009). Although, work can conflict with one's home and family life but workaholism can lead to adverse effects on one's relationship with his or her partner (Burke, 2008). It can affect a person's private life since it includes exclusion of other activities including spending time with spouses which is significant to any healthy, happy relationship. When there is a strain on a relationship due to a partner's workaholism, both partners can become stressed and less supportive of one another resulting in negative behaviour (James & Lea, 2006). Individuals, who work a lot to the point of interference with the rest of his or her life, tend to perceive their family as having less of a strong communication background. These individuals also perceive their families as having family roles that are not as clearly defined as they would like them to be. Leisure time is often perceived as not enjoyable in workaholics (Iso-Ahola & Weissinger, 1990). Similarly, Brady, Vodanovich, and Rotunda (2008) showed that workaholism was positively associated with boredom during leisure activities. ·

Researchers agree that social relationships, at work and outside work are also impaired. Marital difficulties, even culminating in estrangement, are more prevalent in participants who report workaholism than peers (Robinson, Flowers, & Carroll, 2001). They receive less social support from colleagues, feeling they cannot seek guidance or assistance from anyone else. Mudrack (2006) states that in their obsessive dedication to their work, and sometimes their need to demonstrate their competence, these individuals often do not utilize social resources, such as advice or support.

According to Hammer & Thompson (2003) the experiences in the work (family) role result in diminished performance in the family (work) role. This shows that work-family conflict represents cross-role interference in performance.

The knowledge of conflict between work and family is important for organizations and individuals because it is linked to negative consequences (Hammer & Thompson, 2003). Greenhaus & Singh, (2003) state that conflict between work and family is associated with increased absenteeism, decreased turnover, performance, and poorer physical and mental health.

The conflict between the dual roles of motherhood and professionalism might have led some women to trade off their career for more time with their children, which is opting to "stay-at-home" instead of pursuing their career.

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Conclusion

Based on the foregoing, working women should be helped to cope with the challenges of work-family conflict. Thus, there is need for effective policy intervention from organisation and support from the family so as to reduce the complexities of balancing work and family demands.

Implications for Counselling

The study exposes the women dimension of work-family conflict among women while trying to strike the expected work-family balance which could lead to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and self pity. Thus, the knowledge of work-family conflict among women has far reaching implications for counselling.

1. It is imperative that counsellors should be re-trained through the organization of workshops, symposium and seminars so as to keep them abreast with the ensuing challenges in counselling which modernization has thrown up because the findings of this study have confirmed the fact that counselling is for all.

2. Intervention measures should be planned and integrated into the school programme of activities for all students so as to start early enough to give pre-marital counselling to adolescents most especially the girls on the types, benefits and consequences of work-family conflict among women as well as providing current information on coping strategies. This will afford them the opportunity of having an insight into the circumstances surrounding work-family conflict among women so as to help them make appropriate choices about work and family.

4. Counsellors should therefore be at the forefront of the re-educative process for husbands on how to maintain very close and cordial relationship with their wives through effective communication as this will help to improve their self-esteem and interpersonal relationship. They should observe their specific and general interest among others.

5. During seminars, workshops, conferences and meetings of Association of Professional Counsellors in Nigeria (APROCON) organized for practising counsellors, they would be exposed on how to use some counselling strategies. With this wealth of experience, counsellors can effectively handle challenges associated with work-family conflict among women

6. Counsellors could organize programmes on coping strategies for work-family conflict among women to enhance their proper adjustment to work and family.

Recommendations

- There is urgent need for workplace counselling aimed at helping women to acquire skills for self-awareness in order to cope with the ensuing need of striking a balance between work and family thereby educating them on how to handle work and family related stress.
- Working women should be exposed to cognitive restructuring, in order to reduce irrational and maladaptive thought so as to cope effectively with the challenges that may arise from the workplace which in turn may affect their family well-being.

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