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Interferences between work and family among male and female executives in Nigeria

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This paper examines two aspects of work family interfaces: work interference with family and family interference with work in Nigerian context. Survey data from business executives in Nigeria confirmed that job related factors (such as career salience, hours of work, work involvement) were largely associated with work interference with family for both male and female executives. Only one family related factor (number of children) was found to have dominating effect on family interference with work for women executives. Implications to managing work family conflict in Nigeria are explored.

Key words: Work-family conflict, job-related factors, work-related factors, interference.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been an increased interest in work-family interface in the human resource management literature, especially regarding the sources and outcomes of conflict between these two spheres. A number of studies have addressed this issue from different perspectives. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) and Greenhaus et al. (1989) examined the antecedents of conflict between family and work, Goodstein (1994) and Ingram and Simons (1995) presented an institutional perspective on organizations' responses to work-family issues. In addition, Campbell, Campbell and Kennard (1994) have studied the effects of family responsibilities on the work commitment and job performance of women. The work-family issue is even further expanded to address the relationship of business-marriage partners (Foley and Powell, 1997).

Past research has consistently demonstrated that work-family interface is prevalent and, being an important source of stress, has negative impact on employees' well-being and family relationships (Googins, 1991; Voydanoff, 1987; Wiley, 1987; Williams and Alliger, 1994). Given the common perceptions of appropriate roles for men and women, the demands for combining motherhood and marriage with career becomes an immense challenge for many female executives. One may expect that female executives, particularly those who are married and with children, are more likely to experience work-family conflict than their male colleagues (Williams and Alliger, 1994). Such gender differences may have many implications for human resource management, particularly for developing human

resource management policies aiming at alleviating the role strain of employees.

Despite many studies have been done in the West, only a few studies were conducted in the Non-Western Countries. Some notable exceptions include Aryee (1992) and Yuen (1995) which used Singaporean samples, and Aryee and Luk (1996) which examined New Zealand dual-career couples and Adekola (2006) which explored the Nigerian University workers. The present study further explores the extent of work-family conflict among a group of male and female executives in Nigeria.

Our objectives are to examine major sources of conflict between work and family, and possible gender differences in this regard for these executives, and to extend current research work in the Nigeria context. Unlike Aryee's (1992) work which focused on professional women only, this study examines both men and women executives regarding work-family conflict. Since Nigeria is predominately Nigerians and has close connections to many West African Countries, the work-family issues found in Lagos would have implications to rapidly developing cities, like Accra, Cotonou and Lome in Ghana, Benin and Togo respectively; and other major Nigerian cities (like Abuja and Port-Harcourt) as well.

INTERFERENCES BETWEEN WORK AND FAMILY

The interferences between work and family have always been resulted in work-family conflict. Work-family conflict can be defined as a form of inter-role conflict in which the

role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible or incongruous in some respect, whereby participation in one role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the other (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). The extent to which this causes conflict is determined by the closeness of fit between the two spheres. White (1995) found that a majority of successful women professionals have to fit domestic responsibilities around their work, and they are expected to conform to a male career model.

In addition, the existing literature suggested that there are different types of work-family conflict: time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based (Carlson et al., 1995; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). These three forms of conflicts are each related to different types of interferences. The interferences, however, are in turn induced by a number of family and job factors. The following will present how all these variables interact.

In order to understand adequately the dual nature of work-family conflict, it is also important to distinguish conceptually between works interfering with family from family interfering with work (Frone et al., 1992; Gutek et al., 1991). Theoretical and empirical evidences show that the two are different constructs and affected by different sets of factors. For instance, it has been postulated that job-related variables have stronger bearing on work interference with family while family-related variables have greater influences on family interference with work (Prone et al., 1992).

For example, stress experienced at work is often carried over to the family (Doby and Caplan, 1993). Recently, Williams and Alliger (1994) examined the effects of mood and stressors on work and they focused on family intrusions into work. Nonetheless, not much empirical work has yet addressed this issue thoroughly, and particularly little research is done in a Nigerian context, except Aryee (1992) and Yuen (1995). This study intends to enrich the current literature on Nigerian work-family conflict using data collected from business executives in Nigeria.

Nigeria represents an interesting case to examine the issue of work-family conflict of executives, and female executives in particular. On the one hand, rapid economic development in the past few decades has generated a lot of educational and employment opportunities in Nigeria of which young professional women can take advantage of. According to recent government statistics, in 1996 around 23.4% of managers in the private sector were women who earned about 90% as much as their male colleagues (Nigeria Population Census, 2001). This employment picture is even better than some Western countries. On the other hand, being an African society, Nigeria has been characterized by a marked sexual division of labour both inside and outside the family (Adekola, 2006). Married women have to shoulder a great deal of domestic burden even when they are gainfully employed in the labour market, since their husbands have limited participation in

child care and household chores (Pearson, 1990). Worse still, there has been little support from employers and the government concerning child care. Work-family conflict thus becomes an issue encountered by many female executives in Nigeria which may restrict their full commitment to their jobs. In view of the above, the socio-cultural characteristics of Nigeria may provide us a different picture to understand work-family conflict. Thus, Nigeria serves as an interesting place to study the interplay of work and family for both male and female executives, especially in the context of a rapidly developing economy with a Nigerian culture. Implications from examining this issue in Nigeria could be drawn to other African and Asian economies, such as Taiwan, China, South Africa and Ghana.

FACTORS RELATING TO WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT

Given the uneven distribution of household responsibilities between couples, it is commonly believed that working wives may experience more work-family conflict than their spouses. Prior research has borne this notion out (Aryee and Luk, 1996; Carlson et al., 1995; Herman and Gyllstrom, 1977; Jick and Mitz, 1985; Wiersma, 1990).

In particular, for married managerial women who are likely to be members of dual-career families, a significant amount of household commitment has to be balanced with the pursuit of career. Thus, these women might feel greater role pressures from both the work and family domains as compared to their male counterparts.

The debate of 'gender' versus 'job' models of women's employment provides some insight into the issue of work-family conflict among women executives (Feldberg and Glenn, 1979; Lorence, 1987). The 'gender' model highlights the importance of household responsibilities faced by working wives in generating conflict between domestic and work roles (Cosser and Rokoff, 1970; Voydanoff, 1988).

The 'Job' model suggests that factors in the work-place such as working conditions and Job characteristics are more influential in explaining employees' perceptions and work orientations (Kanter, 1977; Kohn, 1976). Thus, it is plausible that the 'gender' model helps to account for how family interferes with work, while the 'job' model illustrates how work interferes with family. In this manner, these two models could be considered as complementary to each other in understanding work-family conflict.

Three forms of work-family conflict are highlighted in existing literature (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). The first is time-based conflict in which the time spent on activities within one role makes it difficult to participate in another role. This form of conflict is positively related to the number of working hours, the amount and frequency of overtime, and the presence and irregularity of shiftwork (Pleck et al., 1980). Another factor associated with time-

based conflict is control over the work schedule (Herman and Gyllstrom, 1977). The possibility of flexible working hours is likely to alleviate this form of work-family conflict while a rigid schedule may have an opposite effect (Pleck et al., 1980). Generally, this form of work-family conflict will more be reflected in the work interference with family. The second form of conflict is strain-based, in which strain symptoms, such as tension, anxiety, and fatigue, experienced within one role intrude into the other role and affect one's performance in that role. In the case of work-family conflict, the two roles are incompatible in the sense that the strain and stress generated by one makes it difficult to comply with the demands of another. A number of work role characteristics (including role ambiguity, work demands, stressors, and job autonomy) are found to be related to this form of work-family conflict (Burke et al., 1980; Jones and Butler, 1980; Pleck et al., 1980). On the other hand, family role characteristics such as the presence of young children and the availability of social support from household members are also associated with strain-based conflict (Gove and Geerken, 1977). It follows that strained-based conflict can be present in both work interference with family and family interference with work.

The last form of work-family conflict is behaviour-based conflict, in which specific patterns of in-role behaviours are incompatible with expectations regarding behaviour within the other role. For example, the managerial stereotype emphasizes aggressiveness, self-confidence, emotional stability, and objectivity (Schein, 1973). This is in sharp contrast to the image and behavioural expectations of a wife in the family, who is supposed to be care-giving, sympathetic, nurturant, and emotional. One may thus expect that female executives are more likely to experience this form of conflict than male executives, as females have to strive hard to fulfil different role expectations in the workplace and in the family. Thus, behaviour-based conflict is more serious among women (Campbell et al., 1994; Williams and Alilger, 1994). It will present in family interferences with work more than the other type.

In view of the various forms (or nature) of conflict discussed above, male and female executives may experience different degrees of work-family conflict. It seems plausible that behaviour-based conflict is more serious for female executives than males. On the other hand, a number of factors may condition the amount of time-based and strain-based conflict as experienced by male and female managers. Some of these factors are related to work-role characteristics while others are associated with family life.

DETERMINANTS OF WORK-FAMILY INTERFERENCES

As discussed above, a number of job- and family-related factors are expected to influence the degree of work-family conflict. These factors and their relevant support

are discussed below.

Job-related factors

The first is career salience, that is, the psychological identification with work role. As argued by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), work role salience may lead to a higher level of work-family conflict. Inspired by Hall's (1976) model of psychological success, they pointed out that when a person's career subidentity grows; a person will become more ego-involved in that particular role and exhibit higher levels of motivation. This, in turn, may increase time commitment to that role and produce strain that may interfere with another role. As a result, role pressures and inter-role conflict emerge. This argument is generally supported by empirical evidence (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus and Kopelman, 1981).

Another major determinant of work-family conflict is one's involvement at work, that is, the degree to which a person actively participates in his or her work role (Lodahl and Kejner, 1965). It influences the time and effort one could spend in the job. It has been found that high work involvement is associated with higher levels of work-family conflict (Prone and Rice, 1987; Wiley, 1987). While work involvement could be an outcome of career salience, objective characteristics in the workplace such as work conditions and job demands may also have significant impacts upon the amount of involvement put in one's work. For this reason, it is believed that work involvement has an effect upon work-family conflict above and beyond one's career salience.

According to the rational view, the more hours one expends in both the work and the family domains, the more conflict one will perceive (Keith and Schafer, 1984; Gutek et al., 1991). A positive relationship has well been confirmed in past research between time commitment to work and work-family conflict (Greenhaus et al., 1987; Greenhaus et al., 1989; Voydanoff, 1988). Gutek et al. (1991) further noted that, for working women, the time they spent in work activities is strongly associated with work interference with family, rather than family interference with work.

A job-related factor that has drawn increasing research attention recently is job flexibility. Job flexibility reflects the autonomy and/or control one has regarding time schedule and work location. It has been suggested that high flexibility at work facilitates job-family compatibility and thus reduces work-family conflict (Glass and Camarigg, 1992; Ngo, 1992; Parasuraman et al., 1996). For example, a highly flexible job (such as working at home) may allow women to shift between their domestic and work roles easily and hence better manage their time (Ngo, 1992).

Family-related factors

Apart from factors in the workplace, family-related

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of male and female respondents.

	Females		Males	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Age	31.99	3.26	35.48	4.79
Number of children	0.60	0.70	1.10	0.91
Age of the youngest children	1.49	2.45	3.15	4.23
Management levels	(%)		(%)	
Top management	14		43	
Middle management	76		50	
Junior management	10		7	

variables may also have a significant impact on work-family conflict, particularly on family interference with work. While the effects of the job-related factors are generally not gender-specific, the influence of family-related factors on work-family conflict is expected to be different for the two sexes. Because of the traditional gender roles that place higher priority on domestic obligations for women (such as child care), factors associated with family life are likely to exert greater influence on women's attitudes and behaviours (Voydanoff, 1988).

The foremost family-related variable that has drawn wide attention is number of children at home (Pleck et al., 1980). Given that child care responsibilities normally rest on women, working wives with more children are likely to experience greater work-family conflict (Beutell and Greenhaus, 1982; Voydanoff, 1988). As shown in previous research, having young children at home is consistently related to role strain and time shortage for women (Keith and Schafer, 1980; Voydanoff and Kelly, 1984). A related variable is the age of the children. Younger children generally require more attention from working parents, and thus more time is needed to spend on them.

Family orientation is an attitudinal factor that may lead to work-family conflict (Parasuraman et al., 1996; Yogev and Brett, 1983). It is postulated that working women who have stronger identity with familial roles are likely to feel the incompatibility between work and family life (Blalby and Blalby, 1988).

Owing to the traditional sex-role ideology, women are socialized to have a stronger orientation to and greater involvement in the family than men. For working wives, role strain and time conflict may occur more frequently as a result of dual commitments to employment and to the family. Based on the previous discussion, job-related factors are likely to play a more important role in determining the degree of work interfering with family, while family-related factors seem to exert stronger influences upon family interfering with work. The relative effects, however, could be different among male and female executives since women are more concerned with their

domestic roles than their work roles as compared to men (Nieva and Gutek, 1981; Voydanoff, 1988).

METHOD

Samples

Data were collected by means of random sampling in the form of a mailed questionnaire administered to alumni of the Faculty of Management Sciences of a Nigerian University (Olabisi Onabanjo University) as part of a larger career development study. The majority of these alumni are employed in the business sector of the economy and in managerial positions. A total of 772 alumni responded to the survey, which represents a response rate of 46.4% out of an effective sample size of 1,664. As married people are more likely to experience work-family conflict than those who are single, only data from married men and women were analyzed in this research. All together, 461 married respondents (97 women and 364 men) are included in the analysis. Demographic details of both male and female executives are shown in Table 1.

Measures

All of variables used in the statistical analysis are operationalized as follows:

Work-family conflict

Four Likert-type items, modified from Frone et al. (1992), are used to measure work-family conflict, tapping the interference of the two life domains with respect to role performance and time allocation. Examples of the items are: "My family life frequently interferes with my job duties" and "My job frequently affects the time I spent with my family". Given the bidirectional nature of this variable, two items each assess the degree to which respondents' job interferes with their domestic life and the degree to which respondents' family life interferes with their work. Thus, the dual aspects of interferences are measured. A factor analysis of the four items results in two distinct factors with alpha coefficients of 0.81 and 0.79 respectively.

Career salience

This is measured by a composite index consisting of the following three Likert-type items: "My personal success depends largely on my career performance", "Career is the first thing in my life", and "Previous important events which happened to me were often related to my career". The scale is adapted from Greenhaus et al. (1989) and Lodahl and Kejner (1965). The alpha value for this index is 0.69.

Work involvement

A single item is used to measure this variable, simply tapping the degree of involvement that is required in one's job. Its value ranges from one (low involvement) to five (high involvement). The item is extracted from Glass and Camarigg (1992).

Hours of work

This is the average number weekly hours of work as reported by the respondents.

Job flexibility

Two items, modified from Greenhaus et al. (1989) are used to measure the degree of flexibility at work along two major dimensions, namely, temporal and locational. Respondents are asked about the degree of flexibility they have regarding time and place of work along a five-point scale. The alpha coefficient for this variable is 0.69.

Number of children

This is the total number of children in the respondent's family. About 70% of the respondents have only one or no child, and only 3% of the respondents have 3 or more children in the family.

Child age

This is the age of the youngest child in the family. There are 65% of the respondents whose youngest children are 2 years old or less, and only 15% of the respondents have youngest children whose age are over 6.

Family orientation

Two items of a 5-point Likert scale are used to measure this variable. They are: "I am a family-oriented person" and "In my life, the greatest satisfaction comes from my family". This variable is adapted from Yogeve and Brett's (1985) Family Involvement Scale, which has an alpha value of 0.75 in this study.

It is worth noting that some families are getting help either from domestic helpers or grandparents. With a total of 108 million households, around 70,000 live-in domestic helpers (mostly Togolese and Benionise maids) are employed in Nigeria. In addition, there are 2.84 Million vertical extended families (three-generation households). Thus, a portion of Nigeria working couples have some kind of domestic help from maids or grandparents, cousins and nieces.

Two control variables are also included in the analysis. The first is the respondent's age which captures the effects of life cycle and years of work experience. The other is management level (i.e., the position in the organizational hierarchy) and respondents are classified into one of the following categories: top management, mid-level, and junior managerial level. One may expect greater managerial responsibilities to be associated with greater job pressure and strain. The management level variables were dummy coded for data analysis purposes.

Analysis

In this study, work-family conflict is considered to be the dependent variable which is determined by a number of factors. It has been argued that job-related variables (including career salience, work involvement, hours of work, and job flexibility) play important roles in work interference with family, while family-related variables (including number of children, age of youngest child, and family

orientation) are more influential in the case of family interference with work. Moreover, the magnitude of effects is expected to be different for men and women. To verify these claims, multiple regression analysis is employed. The means, standard deviations and inter-correlations of key variables are shown in Table 2. For comparison purposes, we separate the analysis for male and female respondents. Age and management levels are controlled for both groups of respondents.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In general, respondents of both sexes scored higher on work interference with family than family interference with work ($t = 17.62$, $p < 0.01$) when compared with work as a dependent variable. This result is consistent with Gutek et al. (1991) explanation that domestic work is more elastic than paid work. It should also be noted that the business community of Nigeria is highly competitive and local executives strive hard for career success. Being fully committed to their jobs, most of these executives spend long hours at work.

Thus, they may find their career interferes with family life much more than the other way around. Interestingly, female respondents in our sample report slightly lower levels of both types of work-family conflict than their male counterparts, though the sex differences are not statistically significant.

Table 3 displays the results of regression analysis on work interference with family. The control variables in this study exert no effect on the dependent variable, as both age and managerial levels are not statistically significant in the full models. Columns 2 and 4 show the regression coefficients for female and male samples respectively from which gender comparison can be made. First of all, the findings confirmed that job-related factors rather than family-related factors are strongly associated with work interference with family.

All family-related factors are not significant for both sexes. It could be that some families obtained assistance from domestic helpers or grandparents as noted earlier, and thus the need of child care not so severe. In addition, only very few families have more than one child. Thus, the family variables may have limited effects on work interference with family if they already have some arrangements to alleviate the conflicts. It is noted that job-related factors in the female respondents explain much more variance than male executives (more than 30%).

It has been argued that strong commitment to career and to the job makes it harder for women to perform their domestic role as prescribed by the traditional sex-role ideology, and thus, the interference of paid employment with the domestic sphere becomes more severe for them. Nonetheless, the effects of job-related factors are strong in both samples. Interestingly, in contrast to conventional wisdom and literature, the flexibility of a job did not have any effect on work interference with family.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations of key variables.

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Age	34.74	4.73												
2. Sex (female = 1)	0.21	0.41	0.30**											
3. Top management	0.37	0.48	0.41**	0.24**										
4. Middle management	0.55	0.50	0.29**	0.22**	0.85**									
5. Career salience	8.49	2.44	0.26**	0.19**	0.27**	0.25**								
6. Job flexibility	5.37	1.94	0.18**	0.23**	0.24**	0.21**	0.22**							
7. Work involvement	3.76	0.92	0.14**	-0.04	0.16**	0.12**	0.29**	0.05						
8. Hours of work	48.59	8.66	0.08	-0.08	0.20**	0.19**	0.24**	0.14**	0.26**					
9. Number of children	1.00	0.89	0.58**	0.22**	0.25**	0.17**	0.07	0.16**	0.18**	0.11*				
10. Age of the youngest child	2.83	4.00	0.73**	0.16**	0.29**	0.21**	0.20**	0.06	0.16**	0.10*	0.49**			
11. Family orientation	7.17	1.52	0.03	-0.09	0.08	-0.03	0.18**	-0.03	0.03	0.00	0.18**	0.07		
12. Work-family conflict	5.74	1.97	0.04	-0.04	0.08	0.11*	0.35**	0.13**	0.33**	0.35**	0.11*	0.06	-0.09	
13. Family-work conflict	4.47	1.41	0.04	-0.06	-0.02	0.02	0.20**	0.19**	0.08	0.12**	0.02	-0.02	-0.00	0.31**

Note: N = 409 - 461 depending on missing value; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01.

Table 3. Regression analysis on work interference with family.

Variables	Females		Males	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Control variables				
Management levels				
Top management	-0.188	-0.251	-0.074	-0.106
Middle management	-0.205	-0.110	-0.210	-0.117
Age	0.215	0.175	0.031	-0.108
Job-related factors				
Career salience		0.465**		0.228**
Hours of work		0.202*		0.248**
Work involvement		0.371**		0.148**
Job flexibility		0.015		0.058
Family-related factors				
Number of children		0.161		0.109
Age of the youngest child		-0.138		-0.012
Family orientation		0.128		-0.070
R-square	0.051	0.540**	0.026*	0.229**
Δ in R-square		0.488**		0.204**
N		80		327

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01.

In Table 4, the effects of various independent variables on family interference with work are reported. The control variables, again, have no significant effects on the dependent variable. For female executives, only one family-related factor (namely, the number of children) is found to be an important predictor. The family-related factors are not significant at all in the male sample. On the contrary, some job-related factors are significant in affecting family interference with work in the male sample, but not in the

female sample. This is different from what Frone et al. (1992) suggested. This result, however, lends support to the assertion that there could be a gender-specific mechanism of work-family conflict, especially in an African society like Nigeria with marked sexual division of labour. Although it is claimed in the literature that women with child care responsibilities and stronger family commitment often find it more difficult to fulfil dual roles when working full-time outside home, this is not supported from

Table 4. Regression analysis on family interference with work.

Variables	Females		Males	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Control variables				
Management levels				
Top management	0.014	-0.105	-0.104	-0.163
Middle management	0.001	-0.086	-0.053	-0.030
Age	-0.078	-0.227	0.064	0.072
Job-related factors				
Career salience		0.191		0.216**
Hours of work		0.053		0.071
Work involvement		0.184		0.050
Job flexibility		0.097		0.148**
Family-related factors				
Number of children		0.435**		-0.053
Age of the youngest child		-0.099		-0.064
Family orientation		0.211		0.003
R-square	0.006	0.237*	0.005	0.104**
Δ in R-square		0.232**		0.099**
N		80		325

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01.

the data of this study. Job-related factors have no effects at all for the female executives. Male executives, on the other hand, report family interference with work only when they are strongly committed to their career and when their jobs are highly flexible in nature. As they want to spend more time and energy on work, family life tends to become a hindrance to their career pursuit.

IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

The continuing entry of women into managerial positions has led to concerns about work-family conflict. This study addresses this issue in the context of Nigeria. Following current literature, we emphasized the distinction between work interfering with family and family interfering with work. It was further postulated that these two dimensions of work-family conflict are determined by different factors. Our results basically confirmed the conceptual distinction of these two types of conflict. Such a differentiation should be recognized in future research work.

In addition, it has been found that the causal variables are different for male and female executives, and also in different types of interferences. Family-related factors have no effects on work interference with family, for both male and female executives. Only job-related factors are important predictors. The job-related factors have effects on family interference with work among male executives only, whereas the number of children has very significant

effects on female executives' family interference with work. This result highlights the impact of gender division of labour in the household upon work-family conflict as experienced by male and female executives.

The role of job flexibility in work-family interface is worth noting. Our findings indicate that this variable is not always associated with the two dimensions of work-family conflict. The only exception is its effect on family interference with work among male executives. One reason perhaps is the relatively lower reliability (0.69 with two items only) of job flexibility. In anyway, this implies that the current management practice of providing more job flexibility to employees may not be necessary. It has been suggested that in order to reduce work-family conflict, an effective way is to increase job flexibility so that employees are in a better position to balance the demands from the two domains of life (Pleck et al., 1980). Practically speaking, to alleviate the conflict between work and family domains, companies are urged to develop work-family programs and policies that aim at enhancing job flexibility and releasing domestic burdens of executive women. Some examples are flexible or alternative work schedules (Scandura and Lankau, 1997). However, the current data did not support this kind of job arrangement in achieving its goal. Local companies may have to look for other means to relief the burdens of female executives, instead of relying primarily on flexible work arrangements.

Provision of creche, for instance, has found to be an

effective means to increase employees' job satisfaction and commitment, improve work climate, as well as reduce staff turnover (Ezra and Deckman, 1996; Youngblood and Chambers-Cook, 1984). In this sense, organizations can play a key role in reducing work-family conflict of female executives by introducing direct supportive practices. Employee assistance programs (EAP) can be incorporated in human resource management strategies. It has been found that EAP which include work-family arrangements are effective in decreasing tardiness, absenteeism, and rates of turnover (Herlihy, 1997). The strain-based conflict and related stress of employees due to work-family interferences can thus be reduced.

On the other hand, most work-family conflict is associated with job-related factors only. Family-related factors have no effects in most cases (except the number of children in female executives' family interference with work). This implies that employee's working environment and related jobs/tasks are important areas to manage. From an organizational systems perspective, not only pertinent policies, procedures, or programs could be introduced, but the perceptions and thinking of employees have to be considered. This is especially true in Nigeria when downsizing and layoffs are frequently practiced, the commitment of employee may have been affected (Ngo and Lau, 1996). Appropriate training and education in employees' attitudes towards job and family interface, for example, could reduce employees' defensive reasoning about work-family conflict (Watkins, 1995). This is done through management development to re-examine the deeply held beliefs about the role of managers in balancing dual demands from work and family. The strategic focus of organizational response to work and non-work boundary is also critical to helping employees to cope with stress and conflict. Kirchmeyer (1995) found that employer-provided resources for employees to fulfil non-work responsibilities themselves are proven to be very effective. The current study shows that job-related factors are relatively more important in both types of interferences. Thus, responses at the organizational level are necessary in Nigeria. This could reduce both strain-based and behaviour-based work-family conflict.

It is also important to note that not only female executives experience work-family conflict; male executives do experience both types of conflict too. Past research and practice have often neglected male executives and this has to be corrected (Pleck, 1993). More effort could be devoted to understanding work-family interface among male executives as well. In addition, the gender differences in the process and outcomes of work-family conflict can be further explored.

For future research, it is possible to examine the three forms of work-family conflict in depth. For example, time-based conflict is assumed to be associated with job-related factors, and strain- and behaviour-based conflict are related to both family and paid employment (Adekola, 2006). How these factors are related to each other and to

what extent each affects work interference with family and family interference with work is worth further investigation.

Moreover, the current study is primarily based on quantitative data which provides a good test of basic constructs and relationships among different variables. A qualitative study of men and women executives, however, might provide additional insight for understanding work-family conflict. The current study demonstrates that the role of family-related factors is not so important among Nigerian executives. Most work-family conflict is resulted from job-related factors. In an economically developed State like Nigeria, emphasis should be put on creating a working environment which could reduce stress and strain arising from work-family interface.

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