

IMPACT OF WORK-LIFE POLICIES ON ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT OF FEMALE PROFESSIONALS IN THE NIGERIAN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the relationship between work-life policies (WLP) and organizational commitment (OC) and determine if work-life balance (WLB) mediates in the relationship. The rationale for this research stems from the shift in societal traditional model of work that has made dual-earner households a culture and the significant role of work life balance in influencing organization performance and family well-being. A quantitative research approach was employed to achieve the main objectives of the study by obtaining data from 120 women professionals in the construction industry in Abuja and Minna. The paper presents a conceptual model to formulate hypotheses which were tested using PLS-SEM path analysis. The analysis reveals that WLP have no direct effect on organisational commitment but have an indirect effect on it through WLB. The study concludes that a balance between work and family life of women professional employees will enhance positive organisational commitment, as it strongly mediates the relationship between WLP and OC. However, one of the limitations of this paper is in its cross-sectional design and the authors suggest that future longitudinal studies be conducted to examine the impact of WLB on organisational performance of both men and women in construction. The implication of this study is that it avails managers and employer the opportunity to understand the significance of providing WLP that will enable employees balance their work and family responsibilities as they promote OC.

Keywords: Organizational commitment, Path analysis, Women professional, Work-life balance, Work-life policies

INTRODUCTION

Career advancement and career development depends on a well-defined career path opportunity including capabilities, authorizations and accreditations (Strategic Skills Initiative, 2005). Crawford (2002) asserted that due to globalization, there has been increase in female intake into the construction industry. It is essential that women's career dynamic forces are understood in order to know how the industry can maintain its female professionals, this will allow organisations to be flexible to the decisions and problems of their employees are facing (Greenhaus and Callanan, 1994). Also, Ling and Leow (2008) concluded that in order to encourage women professionals in the construction industry, it is expected that employers should allow flexible work schedule, allow professional women to work from home, and should be given the same career progression as their male counterparts among others. Jimoh *et al.* (2016) asserted that women face challenges in their career progression especially in construction related endeavours as distinct from the manufacturing sector. There are a number of factors which affect the career development of women. In Nigeria, Construction job falls under the classes of economic activities where women have been underscored not to have the privilege to make a successful career more so when the issue of balancing the work life and home responsibilities is involved.

The theory of WLB which also means 'work-life conflict' or 'work-enrichment' has been defined in various ways in literature. For example, Greenblatt (2002) defined WLB as the nonexistence of undesirable levels of conflict between work and non-work responsibilities. Greenhaus et al. (2003) provided a more comprehensive definition of WLB which they described as the level to which an individual is equally engaged or satisfied with his or her work and family responsibilities. This definition does consider that balance can either be positive or negative. This study thus aligns to a spill-over model which suggests that one sphere can influence the other either positively or negatively (O'Driscoll, 1996). However, in recent years, many research efforts have focused on the relationship between the work and family life experiences of people in paid employment due to increasing concern resulting from work pressures and intense changes to traditional family roles and arrangements in most developed nations (Lobel et al., 1999). In response to these growing pressures which have continued unabated as a result of shifting in societal norms, the concept of WLB has evolved to help spouses in obtaining a balance in both work and family spheres which is becoming more challenging (Lewis et al., 2007; Families and Work Institute, 2008). For example, social changes in the traditional role of male as main source of income and the existence of dual-earner families have become the model, where both spouses work and make contributions to a common purse to fund family responsibilities (Eby et al., 2005; Brough et al., 2008; Families and Work Institute, 2008). These continuous changes in family responsibilities as well as inherent pressure exerted by working condition is not limited to a specific industry, the experience cut across industries. However, the extent to which these experiences affects the WLB of employees working in the construction industry is not known. Although, Lingard et al. (2015) reported that the level of risk for work stress associated with excessive workloads, time constraints and deadlines within the construction industry is very high, but the findings may be country specific because of the settings within the Australian construction industry which is not the same as Nigeria. Lingard et al. (2015) give credence to the assertion of Leung et al. (2008), who stated that below optimal performance of construction project managers could be linked to the work stress. However, the extent to which WLB experience of construction industry employees affect their commitment and performance has not been given much attention. This paper therefore, aims to develop a better understanding of the concept of WLB experience within the construction industry and its implications in improving organisational commitments. A number of studies in the context of the construction industry have examined the impact of WLB on firms or employees, but many of the studies viewed it from the point of stress (e.g. Ng et al., 2005; Leung et al., 2008; Lingard et al., 2010). However, most of these studies examined WLB without paying much attention to its impact on OC. This paper thus examines the impact of WLB on OC.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical background, hypotheses and conceptual model

Although few research efforts on WLB exist in the construction industry, but many of these studies were conducted in advanced countries such as Australia (Leung et al., 2008; Lingard et al., 2010). Some of these studies have identified that there is a problem regarding work-life experience of construction employees (e.g. Lingard et al., 2010). In fact, Lingard et al. (2010) reported that the level of interference due to time constraints and stress-based work with family life are higher among Australian construction workers than among other occupational groups. The causes of this interference maybe as a result of lack of flexibility of work hours, and

employees are expected to strike a balance between their work and family responsibilities which many organisations do not provide (Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), 1990). For instance, Kirk-Walker (1994) posited that very few construction organisations provide employees with policies that give employees flexible working hours, childcare facilities, career-break programmes, or make provision for part-time work within their organisations. Non-existence of clear WLP in many organisations has made it difficult particularly for women who desire to take up paid job in the construction industry and at the same time maintained a balance with work and non-work responsibilities. In many instances, they are often faced with the choice to either choose a career or a family (Toohey and Whittaker 1993), and women who chose to have time out of the industry to have family may be deprived or experience stunted growth in their career advancement (Loosemore *et al.*, 2003). Building on this, Ng *et al.* (2005) viewed work-family balance as one of the slightest easily managed work stressors experienced by construction professionals.

In spite of the attention given to the study on work-life balance as a subject of discussion among academics and industry practitioners, and the growing popularity of WLB in organizations around the globe (Kersley *et al.*, 2005; Lingard *et al.*, 2015), study on the organizational effects of such concept has not been well examined within the construction industry. The need to integrate such research within the construction industry stems from the obvious changes in the economic pattern, shift in demography, technological advancement, socio-political structures of our society as well as the entrance of women into the workforce (Guest, 2002), which have continued to impact on both the nature of paid employment and its relationship to life outside work (Aryee *et al.*, 2005). In order to explore the relationship between WLB and organisational commitment, the social exchange theory proposed by Blau (1964), which hypothesised that, workers who experienced high WLB may likely be more committed than those that experience low work-life balance. This theory was supported by the findings from Siegel *et al.* (2005), who found that higher levels of work-life balance could be associated to an increased OC and that high levels of procedural equality will interact with other factors to increase OC. Consistent with the earlier advanced theoretical underpinnings (e.g. Blau, 1964; O'Driscoll, 1996), The study therefore conceptualised that a balanced work and non-work life is linked with increased job satisfaction and OC (Cegarra-Leiva *et al.*, 2012). This means that in work spheres, high levels of work-life balance will often result into improved performance and less absenteeism of employees, while in family spheres it will enhance employees' well-being and family fulfilment. This is given credence by general agreement amongst scholars that a balance in work and life roles is highly treasured by nearly all employees (Kossek *et al.*, 2014) and it has significant effects on their well-being and work productivity across the globe (Lyness and Judiesch, 2014). Furthermore, Allen (2001) proposed that the presence of WLB in an organisation mediates in the relationship between WLP and both affective commitment and job satisfaction. Research has also shown that the relationship between WLB interventions and job outcomes is indirect when mediated by work-family enrichment (Baral and Bhargava, 2010). Premised on these assertions, the study's hypothesised as follows:

H1: *Work-life balance will positively impact employees' OC.*

H2: *WLB will positively relate to WLP (supportive policies)*

H3: *WLP will positively relate to OC*

H4: *WLB will mediate the relationship between WLP and OC.*

Therefore, the conceptual model to indicate the hypothesised paths presented in the study is demonstrated in Fig. 1. The current research aims at establishing the relationship between the constructs depicted in the model and test the hypothesised paths: that WLB will positively relate to OC; WLB will positively relate to WLP; WLP will positively relate to OC; and that the relationship between WLP and OC will be mediated by WLB.

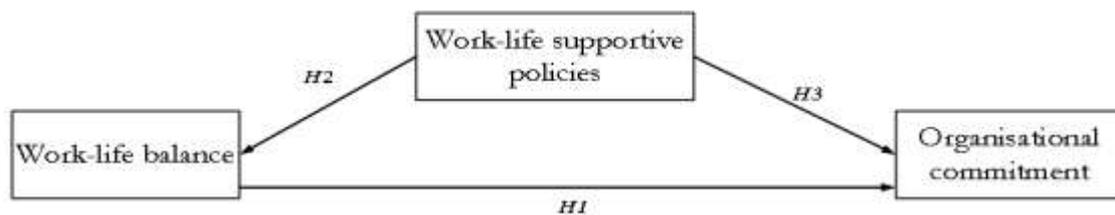


Fig. 1: Conceptual model showing hypothesised paths

RESEARCH METHODS

In order to achieve the main aim of this study, a cross-sectional quantitative survey approach was used. Items included in the survey questionnaire were derived from extensive review of relevant literature both within and outside the construction management field which was self-administered to participants within the Nigerian construction industry, specifically Abuja and Minna. The study employed purposive sampling techniques because the population of the women professionals working in the construction industry in the study area could not be ascertained, hence the required information was obtained from members of the population who are accessibly available to provide relevant information for the study. In order to determine an appropriate sample size required to make our findings useful, approach used by Ojedokun *et al.* (2015) was adopted. The non-bias estimate technique employed is given by $N > 50 + 8m$, where m is the number of independent variables involved in the study and N is the sample size in the research (Krosnick, 1999). WLB and WLP are the two independent variables; thus 66 respondents were the minimum sample size appropriate for the research. However, 133 questionnaires were administered based on the number of identified respondents in the study area. Out of the 133 questionnaires that were self-administered, 120 questionnaires were returned and considered good for the analysis. This represents approximately 92% response rate.

This study adapted existing scales for the survey and because the research was carried out within the Nigerian construction industry, this made it distinct from the backgrounds from where the scales were adapted from. Therefore, to ensure that the scale was understood by the respondents taking into cognisance the environment where the scale was used, a pilot study was conducted amongst five female lecturers who practice, teach and research within the construction industry. The participants at this stage were not involved in the main survey but they were used to ascertain the extent of comprehensiveness of the questions and to remove potential ambiguities that the target participants may likely find difficult in interpreting or understanding the intended meaning. However, the results of the pilot study indicated that little changes to the structure of the questionnaire were required as well as improvement to the wordings so that the content of the questionnaire could be comprehensible. Following this procedure, the version of the questionnaire after the modifications was the final form that was administered.

Measures

The measures used in this study for the constructs were adapted from various research (such as Francis and Lingard, 2004; Norton, 2009; Lingard *et al.*, 2010; Tripartite Committee on Work-Life Strategy (TCWLS), 2010). The sources of the measures further assisted in enhancing the validity of the adapted measures and in extending the previous research work on WLB from the developed country to the Nigerian context. WLB was measured using 15-item scale adapted from (Lingard *et al.*, 2007; Lingard *et al.*, 2010; TCWLS, 2010). This was used to assess the level of employee's work-life within their organisations in the last five years. *Organisational commitment (affective commitment)* was measured using a 13-item adapted from Meyer *et al.* (1993), Francis and Lingard (2004) and Norton (2009). WLP were assessed using 42-item scale sourced from Hudson (2005) and TCWLS (2010). In order to effectively measure these construct items that evaluated work-life infrastructure/culture, leave benefits, flexible work arrangements as well as employees support schemes were included. These items were assessed based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The data obtained were analysed using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), a path analytic technique that gives an overall test of model fit and an evaluation of model parameters (Byrne, 2010). PLS- SEM analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 2.0 M3.

Measurement Model Assessment

In assessing the measurement model, the study first examines the indicator reliability by considering the square of each of the outer loadings of the constructs indicator. It was observed that some of the indicators have individual indicator reliability values which is closer to the preferred value of 0.7, but they are much higher than the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.4 for exploratory research of this nature (Hulland, 1999). Next is the evaluation of the internal consistency reliability of the model which is given by the composite reliability. Composite reliability should be 0.7 or higher, however for an exploratory research, 0.6 or higher is acceptable (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). The composite reliability of the model in this study are higher than the minimum threshold of 0.7. Moreover, in assessing the convergent validity, Bagozzi and Yi (1988) asserted that the validity should be in the range of 0.5 or higher. This is denoted by the average variance value and the value in this paper ranges between 0.70 and 0.81 which is larger than the minimum acceptable value for reflective latent variables (Table 1). According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), discriminant validity of the latent variable correlations which is the "square root" of AVE of each latent variable should be greater than the correlations among the latent variables as seen in Table 3 (figures in bold). Therefore, the paper argue that the measurement model presented here was satisfactory and offered sufficient empirical evidence with respect to indicator reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

Table 1: Results Summary for Reflective Outer Models

Latent Variable	Indicators	Loadings	Indicator Reliability (i.e., loadings ²)	Composite Reliability	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
Commitment	Self-assessment	0.9352	0.8746	0.8218	0.7008	0.6067
	Commitment to organization	0.7260	0.5271			
Policies	Flexible work arrangement	0.8421	0.7091	0.8818	0.7136	0.7985
	Support scheme	0.8031	0.6450			
	Work life infrastructures	0.7789	0.6067			
Work-life balance	Self and family support	0.9537	0.9095	0.9269	0.8099	0.8776
	Work and life influence	0.8870	0.7868			
	Self-satisfaction	0.9558	0.9178			

Table 2: Discriminant Validity of Constructs.

Latent Variable	Commitment	Policies	Work-life balance
Organisational Commitment	0.8371		
Policies	0.7624	0.8553	
Work-life balance	0.8266	0.8239	0.8999

Note. Diagonals represent the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) while the other entries represent the correlations.

Structural model assessment

To assess the structural model's predictive significance for each of the endogenous latent variables, blindfolding was conducted. The blindfolding procedure uses the default setting whereby an omission distance of seven yielded cross-validated redundancy values for all three endogenous latent variables which is well above zero (Work-life balance: 0.534; work-life policies: 0.714; Organisational commitment: 0.466), these give the required confirmation to the model's predictive importance. Hence, to evaluate the inner model, we evaluated the coefficient of determination and the path coefficient (Figure 2). The target endogenous variable variance was explained using the coefficient of determination, R^2 , which is 0.847 for the OC endogenous latent variable. This implies that the two latent variables (WLP and WLB) strongly explain 84.7% of the variance in OC, while WLP explain 67.9% of the variance of WLB. In assessing the Inner model path coefficient sizes and significance (Table 3 and Figure 3), the structure suggests that WLB has the strongest effect on OC (0.909), while WLP has direct weak effect on OC (0.014), but WLP indirectly has strong total effect on OC 0.763. Based on the hypothesized paths, it was found that:

- ∞ The hypothesized path relationship between WLP and WLB is statistically significant.
- ∞ The hypothesized path relationship between WLB and OC is statistically significant.
- ∞ The hypothesized path relationship between WLP and OC is statistically significant

However, the hypothesis that WLB mediate in the relationship between WLP and OC is statistically significant. This is because its standardized path coefficient (0.763) is higher than 0.1. also, following the Sarstedt *et al.* (2014) approach in determining the level of mediation by

WLB, the final analysis results yield a variance accounted for (VAF) value of 0.982, which indicates that work-life balance fully mediate the relationship between WLP and OC. According to the rule of thumb which states that when the VAF has very large outcomes of above 80%, one can assume a full mediation (Hair, Jr. *et al.*, 2014). Thus we can conclude that: WLP and WLB are both moderately strong predictors of OC, but WLB is a strong mediator between WLP and OC.

Path analysis	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	T Statistics
Flexible work arrangement <- Policies Attachment to organization < - Commitment	0.8421	0.8436	0.0244	0.0244	34.4754
Self-assessment<- Commitment	0.7260	0.7212	0.0719	0.0719	10.0943
Self and family support < - Work life balance	0.9352	0.9363	0.0100	0.0100	93.3755
Self-satisfaction <- Work life balance	0.9537	0.9543	0.0064	0.0064	148.1510
Support scheme <- Policies	0.9558	0.9564	0.0056	0.0056	170.0941
Work and life influence < - Work life balance	0.8031	0.8039	0.0403	0.0403	19.9130
Work life infrastructures <- Policies	0.7789	0.7795	0.0364	0.0364	21.4118
Notes: T-	0.8870	0.8865	0.0187	0.0187	47.4108

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study argued that availability of work-life policies within an organisation will ensure a balance between work and non-work life of employees which will eventually lead to improved OC. Although the relationship appears to be complex, but the analysis indicated that, WLB has positive but strong relationship with OC, as the paper had postulated (*H1*). However, the available policies on ground based on our data showed that WLB mediate the relationship

between WLP and OC (H3). The findings from the analysed data offer support to our H1, that the WLB is positively and significantly linked to WLP. The finding is consistent with the result of Baral and Bhargava, (2010), which contended that the relationship between WLB interventions and job outcomes is mediated by work-family enrichment. This is in consonance with Allen (2001) and Cegarra-Leiva` *et al.* (2012) who asserted that balanced work and family life is related with increased job satisfaction and OC.

Using SEM-PLS technique, this study found that the work-life balance suggestively predicted WLP and OC. This concludes that improvement in work life balance was positively linked to both work-life policies and OC. The results indicated that establishment of an organisational philosophy that enhances work life balance through family-friendly policies is a recipe for OC. In this research it was found that work-life balance is significantly related to work-life policies, which indicates that OC improves only when employees perceived a balance between work and non-work life. Thus, the implications of the findings for industry practitioners and managers of construction organisation is that to guarantee continuous improvement and commitment of workforces, there is need to develop an organisational culture that is supportive of WLB. This will ensure that initiatives that are family friendly are employed to reduce the resonance effects of the issues from the work sphere on the family sphere, and this will result in enhanced workers' commitment and low job turnover.

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