Chapter 1
Introduction

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Background to the Book

With particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa, the purpose of this book is to contribute to cross-cultural research on the subject of work–family interface by giving an African perspective to it. The book has, to a large extent, being influenced by the steady increase in interdisciplinary academic and applied interest in the nexus between work and family life over the past 3 decades. Propelled by socioeconomic transformations such as increased employment of women; rising hours of work; today's service-intensive globalising economy and changes in family composition and structure, this interest—which spans "the boundaries of disciplines such as sociology, psychology, organisational behaviour, human development, labour economics, industrial relations, management, demography, and women's studies" (Bardoel et al. 2008:318)—has resulted in a substantial strand of literature showing that the interacting trends in the labour market and structure of families are making it increasingly difficult for employees in many countries to provide ordinary attention needed for the wellbeing of family members, including themselves (Bailyn et al. 2001). This literature shows that the 'time-money squeeze' between family responsibilities and work demands often leads to considerable stress and conflict for employees, a phenomenon generally known as 'work–family conflict'.

It is important to recognise the difference between work–family interface and other commonly used concepts in the literature such as 'work–life', 'work–life balance', 'work–care', 'work—care integration', etc. According to Dancaster (2012:21) work–life "includes the ability to integrate work into one's whole life and may include issues unrelated to family and care considerations, such as the ability to take time off work to pursue personal interests or self-development goals

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or to be involved in community issues". Work–care, on the other hand, refers to "the management of one's dependent-care responsibilities … in addition to the responsibilities of the job and excluding more general 'work–life' issues that are unrelated to the need to care" (Dancaster 2012:22). This book is specifically focused on the challenges of combining the roles of paid work—in either the formal or informal sector—and family (however defined) as well as on the response that can enhance work–family balance, whereby the right balance between the commitments of work and those of the family is achieved.

Defining Work–Family Conflict

Defined as "a form of inter-role conflict in which the roles pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985:77), work–family conflict arises when time devoted to the requirements of one domain makes it difficult to fulfil requirements of the other; when the strain from participation in one domain makes it difficult to fulfil requirements of the other or when specific behaviours required by one domain make it difficult to fulfil the requirements of the other (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985).

To the extent that it arises from factors within the work and family domains, work–family conflict is conceptually bi-directional: there can be family-to-work conflict and work–to-family conflict. The former occurs when experiences in the family (for example, the presence of young children, primary responsibility for children, elder care responsibilities, interpersonal conflict within the family unit and unsupportive family members) interfere with work life (Frone et al. 1996). Work–family conflict on the other hand occurs when experiences at work (such as irregular or inflexible work hours; work overload and other forms of job stress; extensive travel and unsupportive supervisors or organizations) interfere with family life (Netemeyer et al. 1996).

Although these two types of interference are strongly correlated, research has found that work roles are more likely to interfere with family roles than vice versa. This is often a result of extended working hours; lack of policies that increase the quality or availability of flexible or alternative working arrangement; lack of workplace social support such as child care support and lack of care-related workplace policies such as paid maternity, paternity and parental leaves (Glass and Estes 1997; Earle et al. 2011; Hegewisch and Gornick 2011).

Impact of Work–Family Conflict

The different conclusions that have been drawn from the research literature on work–family conflict can be encapsulated by considering two main contradictory perspectives: the expansion and the role-conflict hypotheses (Hãrenstam and

Bejerot 2001). The expansion hypothesis (also called the social causation or role-accumulation hypothesis) generally posits that participation in multiple roles provides a greater number of resources—such as better financial situation, greater social integration, improved social support and higher self-esteem—that can be used to promote personal growth, general health and wellbeing and better functioning in other life domains (Hãrenstam and Bejerot 2001; Geurts et al. 2005). Oomens et al. (2007), for example, argue that the availability of alternative roles may serve as a buffer against distress experienced in one role. In other words, the difficulties or demands in one role may be offset by the positive attributes of the other roles.

The most dominant perspective, however, is the role-conflict hypothesis which argues that time and personal energy are two conflicting resources and of limited quantity. According to this perspective, people who occupy multiple social roles inevitably experience conflict which, in turn, may lead to considerable strain and stress on them, their families and their work. For instance, if one's paid job requires frequent overtime work, this limits the available time at home, which may conflict with family demands. Similarly, if one's child is sick this may put strain on work demands (Oomens et al. 2007). Indeed, work–family conflict has attracted the attention of researchers and policymakers because of its implication for, *inter alia,* workplace productivity; child care, health and development; gender equality; and family life. The conflict has, for example, been associated with workplace problems such as high turnover; increased absenteeism; tardiness and decreased job satisfaction, work quality, productivity and competitiveness (Wolcott 1994; International Labour Organisation 2004). According to Wolcott (1994:2):

> Concerns about child care, sick children, elderly parents, marital and family problems can increase absenteeism, coming to work late or leaving early, [affect] concentration and safety on the job. … Family responsibilities can influence a worker's willingness to take on additional tasks, training, travel or relocate, Other employees' efficiency can be affected, especially in teamwork situations, when colleagues and workmates are absent or preoccupied with family concerns. Skilled employees many not be retained because of inadequate child care or inflexible hours are not available after maternity leave. Cost of recruitment, training and 'down time; before new employees are up to par can increase in these circumstances.

Work–family conflict can also lead workers to adopt less than satisfactory childcare solutions such as leaving children alone at home; enlisting the help of an older sibling, often a girl removed from school or taking children to work with them (International Labour Organisation 2004). It is well-documented, however, that having children at work not only takes away from the time and investment (such as training or business development) that women can put into paid work, but it also places children in hazardous environments and at risk of child labour (Cassirer and Addati 2007; International Labour Organisation 2010a). Leaving children alone, in the care of older siblings also has clear implications for the health and development of young children and for the long-term educational and employment opportunities of those children who withdraw from school to provide care.

In terms of child health and development, the failure to reconcile work and family demands has been associated with negative child outcomes, including being less likely to have regular medical check-ups in the first year of life, less likely to receive childhood immunisations, and less likely to breastfeed (Berger et al. 2005; Kamerman 2006; Kusakabe 2006). On the other hand, a 2-decade study done in 16 European countries found that after controlling for per capita income, the availability of technology and other factors related to child health, the availability of paid parental leave policies was associated with lower infant and child mortality rates as well as lower maternal stress (Ruhm 2000). Furthermore, to the extent that parental active involvement in their children's education is associated with children's improved behaviour, greater academic persistence and lower school dropout rates (Heymann and Earle 2000; Ruhm 2000), work–family conflict can affect parental involvement in their children's education, and eventually the children's scholastic performance.

While work–family conflict can also limit men's ability to be involved in family matters, research has shown that the pressures and stresses of this conflict are particularly higher for women who, despite their increasing entry into wage employment, continue to be primarily responsible for the general management of their households and for the care of minor children and elderly members in their households and families (UNECA 2001). It has been consistently noted that combining personal and occupational roles tend to induce physical and psychosomatic symptoms (such as fatigue, anxiety, migraines, hypertension and depression) among women than among men (Oomens et al. 2007; Blin 2008). The International Labour Organisation (2004) also posits that family responsibilities and their conflict with work demands are major factors contributing to: women's disadvantage in the labour market; the prevention of the attainment of equal opportunity and treatment for men and women in employment and the constraining of women's ability to maximise income generation opportunities and/or career prospects.

For society in general, work–family conflict can perpetuate poverty and the societal inequities through, for instance, reducing the number of adults who can participate in paid work; restricting the range of jobs that people are able to take up; and making it difficult to participate in leisure and social activities—which can limit social networks, opportunities and quality of life (International Labour Organisation 2004; Cassier and Addati 2007). This conflict has also been associated with negative impacts in the quality of relations between spouses, and increased risk of family dysfunction (Macewen and Barling 1994; Matthews et al. 1996; Duxbury and Huggins 2003). The "absence effect" hypothesis, for example, posits that women's participation in income generating activities outside the home has the potential to increase stress and conflict within a marriage, particularly when demands associated with both paid work and family roles are high (Greenstein 1995 cited by Reddy 2010). This can be partly attributed to the resultant decrease in the quality and quantity of time couples spend together, increased feelings of role conflict and overload among women and, in some

instances, women's increased awareness of the inequity in the household division of labour (Reddy 2010).

Getting the work–family balance right is therefore not only vital to enhance the wellbeing of workers and their families but it can also have a positive impact on employee motivation, satisfaction and commitment, as well as on business performance and better labour market outcomes (OECD 2001; Pavalko and Henderson 2006). It is largely because of this that many western and industrialised countries have introduced several arrangements that may assist employees to better coordinate their work and domestic obligations. These 'family friendly policies' include, among others, working hour arrangements (for example, flexibility in work schedules, part-time work, working from home and telecommuting), subsidies for childcare, as well as statutory and on-statutory leave such as rights to parental leave, and allowing temporary leave periods for employees to take care of children and other dependent family members (Pavalko and Henderson 2006; Oomens et al. 2007).

While some contend that these policies have no or little significant effect (see Stier et al. 2012), many studies and evaluations of these policies have associated them with reduced individuals' perceived work–family conflict (for example, Crompton and Lyonette 2006) and with better labour market outcomes, work commitment and productivity (Commonwealth of Australia 2002). According to the International Labour Organisation (2004), family-friendly policies can also improve the potential for equity of opportunity between men and women by reducing the interruption of careers that are most often lost to women due to caring responsibilities. Decades of research have also shown that children's health and general development outcomes improve when there are supportive policies that allow parents to participate in their children's health care and scholastic activities (Earle et al. 2011). To this end, work–family interface is an important aspect of social policy because:

> while there are often complex and, at times, contradictory effects of different social policies and employment arrangements on the perception of work–family conflict among women and men … taken together …' national policies and institutional arrangements do make a difference and enhance to some extent the life balance of employed women and men (Stier et al. 2012:278).

Why Sub-Saharan Africa?

The concepts of work and family have varied significance and importance in different countries and cultures. In the West, for example, people tend to emphasise personal accomplishment and achievement through work, where individuals often perceive time spent at work as time spent fulfiling personal ambition. To this end, a Westerner will tend to view the needs of the self and the family as distinct, and will experience conflict when there are demands made by both

(Poelmans et al. 2003). In developing societies, on the other hand, people's focus is typically on the family's welfare, and work is seen not as a means of enhancing the self, but as a means of supporting the family, and as contributing to family welfare instead of competing with it (Yang et al. 2000 cited in Spector et al. 2004). It is also important to recognise that many developing societies have diverse family structures that are "complex, fluid, with wide boundaries and definitions as to what constitutes 'my family' …" (Dancaster 2012:22). It can therefore be expected that the conflicts between work and family will be experienced differently in different societies.

Against this background, a major limitation of the current research and literature on work–family interface is its decidedly Western focus, with the majority of the studies having been done in Anglo countries (such as Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States) and other western countries that share comparable cultural values and economic circumstances (Poelmans et al. 2003; Spector et al. 2004). However, "given that societies differ in the degree of importance attached to work and family, and therefore, the extent to which they are perceived to be compatible" (Aryee et al. 1999), the Western bias of the work–family interface literature means that very little is known about the extent to which employees from different cultures perceive the antecedents and outcomes of work–family conflict (Aryee et al. 1999). According to Shaffer et al. (2011:222) this bias has also "resulted in a disparate and fractured understanding of the dynamic interplay between work and family for those who live and work beyond the borders of [western countries]". Furthermore:

> Given the predominant western permeation of conceptualizations, methods, and operationalizations in [work–family] studies, the results are often inappropriate to the cultures involved in the studies and not easily interpretable (Shaffer et al. 2011:252).

There has, as a result, been emerging calls for more cross-cultural exploration of both the risk factors for the onset of work–family conflict, and its consequences. Proponents of this type of research have argued, among other things, that with the globalisation of the world economy, where managers around the world are being increasingly confronted with real and virtual employees and teams with diverse cultural and socio-demographic backgrounds there is need to document valuable lessons on suitable approaches to address the varying needs of employees (Poelmans et al. 2003; Ishii-Kuntz 1994 cited in Spector et al. 2004).

Given that the few studies that have been done in non-western contexts focused mainly on Asia (for example Abe et al. 2003; Kim and Kim 2004; Kusakabe 2006) and Latin America (for example, Sorj 2004; Reddock and Bobb-Smith 2008), sub-Saharan Africa provides an interesting investigation or case study of the broader issue of work–family interface in developing countries because some of the prevailing socio-economic and demographic transformations currently taking place in the sub-region have important implications for the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities. These changes include an increase in the proportion of older people (Konkolewsky 2008; Makoni 2008); increasing labour force participation of women (United Nations 2009); increased migration and urbanisation

(African Union 2009); increased job insecurity (Aryee 2005); changing marriage patterns and the increasing proportion of female-headed households and the high prevalence of HIV and AIDS (Mokomane 2012).

Increasing Proportion of Older People In the sub-Saharan African context where older persons have virtually no social security or social welfare programmes to cater for their everyday socioeconomic needs (Bigombe and Khadiagala 2003; Taylor 2008), and where nursing homes and homes for the aged remain a foreign concept (Aryee 2005), adult children (particularly daughters) are culturally expected to take responsibility for the care and maintenance of their elderly parents (Bigombe and Khadiagala 2003; Aryee 2005). It is thus not uncommon for working children to live with their parents in urban areas so as to provide this care. Even when children live apart from their elderly parents, they are still expected to visit frequently to provide support and care. This intergenerational caregiving in sub-Saharan Africa therefore contributes a unique type of work–family conflict relative to the West (Aryee 2005).

Increasing Labour Force Participation of Women While increasing labour force participation rates of women in sub-Saharan Africa are a commendable trend, the socioeconomic relations that relegate unpaid family responsibilities to women (Cassirer and Addati 2007) mean that the women are working longer hours than men when both market and non-market activities are taken into consideration (UNECA 2001) and they face the challenges of balancing work and family demands as much as their counterparts in the West (Aryee 2005; Mapedzahama 2008).

Increased Migration and Urbanisation The resultant physical separation of family members due to increased migration in the sub-region has, among other things, reduced household sizes and weakened traditional kinship mode of residential settlement. Together with increased urbanisation this has diminished the strength of traditional extended family networks (Miller et al. 2006) and, as a result, the traditional family support for care roles and domestic tasks, while still frequent, is becoming less available, and many workers can no longer rely on it (International Labour Organisation 2004; Cassirer and Addati 2007).

Increased Job Insecurity The widespread retrenchment of employees in many sub-Saharan African public and private entities that followed the implementation of structural adjustment and economic liberalisation programmes in the 1980s and the 1990s, and the recent global economic crisis has instilled a high sense of job insecurity among many workers in the sub-region (Aryee 2005). While job insecurity is not unique to sub-Saharan Africa, the sub-region's high employment rates and lack of comprehensive social protection programmes such as unemployment benefits (Aryee 2005; Taylor 2008) makes the threat of job insecurity much more stressful for its people. One of the main consequences of this job insecurity has been the ethic of long working hours that many workers have developed in an effort to guard against job losses. In the context of work–family conflict, the long hours spent in formal employment can be broadened to include the time spent in other income generating activities such as petty trading that many sub-Saharan

African workers undertake to augment the inadequate or low pay often associated with the sub-region's labour market (Aryee 2005).

Changing Marriage Patterns and Increasing Proportion of Female-Headed Households From the 1970s a large part of sub-Saharan Africa began to experience significant transformations in marriage patterns reflected in, among others, the increase in age at first marriage for women, and the increase in the amount of time spent out of marriage during adult years (van de Walle 1993; Hertrich 2002). This suggests that many women in the sub-regions are less likely to have a spouse available to help with household responsibilities, and are assuming responsibility alone as the economic provider and caregiver for their children (Cassirer and Addati 2007).

High Prevalence of HIV and AIDS With sub-Saharan Africa being the region most heavily affected by HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS 2008), the most evident social impact of this epidemic has been the great strain on the care-related activities of families, often with critical implications for gender inequality. In particular, to the extent that the HIV and AIDS 'care economy'[1] is performed primarily by women, many working women in sub-Saharan Africa have the extra burden of providing care and support for family and household members infected and affected by the epidemic (Ogden et al. 2004; Miller et al. 2006). Overall, research evidence (see for example, International Labour Organisation 2004; Heymann et al. 2007) shows that the work–family conflict experienced by the many women who provide HIV and AIDS-related care severely restricts their options, often forcing them to choose between employment and care or to combine them, all of which require difficult trade-offs in terms of quality of employment and/or quality of care and has long-term consequences for escaping poverty (International Labour Organisation 2010a).

Despite the foregoing many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, as in many parts of the developing world, do not seem to perceive the work–family conflict as a problem. Similar to what Kusakabe (2006) observed in Thailand, care responsibilities are not placed on the same pedestal as, say, pay and job-security. Overall, workplaces and conditions continue to be structured around an assumption that all workers have a source of unpaid labour to care for their families, or that they will somehow be able to manage their responsibilities. As Dancaster (2008) observed in South Africa, "the notion of the ideal worker as essentially male and free of domestic responsibilities still permeates the thinking of many employers". Furthermore, while many countries of the region provide maternity leave provisions, other 'family friendly' workplace policies such as paternity or parental leave are either non-existent or extremely limited (International Labour Organisation 2010b; Smit 2011). However, the current socioeconomic and demographic changes in sub-Saharan Africa suggest that the development and adoption of mechanisms that

[1] This is described as the unremunerated work undertaken within the home, which ensures the physical, social and psychological maintenance and development of family members, as well as 'volunteer' activities in the community that keep the social fabric in good order (Ogden et al. 2004).

will allow participation in paid employment for those women with caring responsibilities will increasingly become a key policy issue in many countries of the sub-region. Overall, the situation is succinctly described by the following statement:

> The lack of collective measures and support for balancing paid work and family responsibilities constrains many households to turn to 'individual reconciliation strategies', often with adverse consequences to families' wellbeing and decent work objectives. This situation hits poor and vulnerable families the hardest, as they have the weakest economic capacity to purchase goods (processed foods, labour saving devices) or services (private childcare, health services for the ill, domestic help) that can free up time for paid work (International Labour Organisation 2010a:4).

There is, against this backdrop, an urgent need for public and private workplaces in the sub-region to adapt to the socioeconomic and demographic transformations, and put in place explicit mechanisms that will allow workers to adequately reconcile the demands of work and family. It is however imperative that all policies and programmes aimed at achieving a work–family balance should be evidence-based. As Korenman and Kaester (2005) caution, considerable care is needed before assuming that the more "family friendly" institutional arrangements present on western countries would be desirable for developing countries. In addition, given the often-advanced argument that governments in developing countries cannot adequately deliver family support because of limited human and technical resources, undertaking context-specific research will highlight the most appropriate support mechanisms for the region, including the most feasible modes of delivery of those mechanisms.

To contribute to cross-cultural research on work–family interface, the remaining 11 chapters of this book use a variety of evidence—primary and secondary—to highlight various aspects of work–family interface in sub-Saharan Africa, including the antecedents and consequences of work–family conflict; its impact on workers and their families; workers' current coping strategies and their limitations and plausible future support and coping mechanisms.

In the next chapter Francis Annor uses the case of employed parents in Ghana to illustrate the lived experiences of African parents who combine paid work with family commitments. His chapter is complemented by that of Virginia Mapedzahama who uses the lived experiences of working mothers in Australia and Zimbabwe to show a cross-cultural comparative perspective on the subject. The second part of the book discusses some of the key factors underlying work–family conflict in sub-Saharan Africa. In the first chapters by Chantal Epie and Afam Ituma it is shown that long working hours and the number and age of children are important contributory factors in Nigeria. Ejike Onkonkwo's chapter explores the extent to which the number and age of children can be an additional factor in Nigeria. In Chap. 6 sexual harassment is identified as contributory factors in South Africa by Francine Masson and Eleanor Ross.

The two chapters that make up the third part of the book explore some of the impacts of work–family conflict on families. The lead chapter by Dolly Ntseane shows how the government's job transfer policy in Botswana aggravates the

conflict among dual-career families, and the impact of these on spouses and other interfamily relationships. The chapter by Francine Masson and Eleanor Ross, on the other hand, highlights the impact of work–family conflict on gender roles in South Africa. Chapters in the fourth and last part discuss the current coping strategies used by workers with family responsibilities in sub-Saharan Africa and some of the plausible coping strategy that are worthy of consideration by policymakers. Gladys Muasya uses Kenya as an example to show how house helps or domestic workers are a common and valuable coping strategy for many working parents. This is followed by two chapters in which Ndangwa Noyoo and Lisa Dancaster, with a focus on Zambia and South Africa, respectively, advocate for explicit family policies and state measures as mechanisms to enhance work–family balance in sub-Saharan Africa. The book concludes with a chapter in which Desire Chilwane and I assess the current state of work–family research in sub-Saharan Africa and use this, and the conclusions of the preceding ten chapters to propose a future research agenda to inform both academic interests and policymaking in this area.

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