

Chapter 4

Working Hours and Work–Family Conflict in the Institutional Context of Nigeria

Chantal Epie and Afam Ituma

Introduction

Recent years have witnessed a growing global interest in work–family and work–life issues and the topic has attracted considerable empirical and theoretical attention in the literature. Throughout the world, efficient and effective work–family and work–life balance programs have been upheld as measures that can contribute to societal productivity and well-being (Ransome 2007; Ten Brummelhuis and van der Lippe 2010; for a review of the literature, see Kelly et al. 2008). Harrington and Ladge (2009:148), point out that the topic of work–life or work–family interface “has evolved into one of the most significant business issues of the twenty-first century” and many firms are increasingly adopting some type of work–life and work–family balance program because of their potential to effectively contribute to employee well-being and positive organizational outcomes.

Although we are dealing with an issue of global concern, and considerable research has been conducted on a variety of work–family topics, there have, paradoxically, been few studies of these issues in diverse national contexts, particularly non-Western contexts. Those few studies have focused mostly on Asia (for example, Lee et al. 2011; Jyothi and Jyothi 2012). Comparative studies have also concentrated on American, European, and Asian populations (for example, Lu et al. 2010). Consequently, our knowledge has been largely informed by research and models developed in Western industrialized countries and may not truly reflect the situation in African national contexts. In this respect, the challenges confronting individuals and organizations in Africa constitute a relatively neglected

C. Epie (✉)

Lagos Business School, Pan-Atlantic University, Km 22, Lekki-Epe Expressway,
Lagos, Nigeria
e-mail: cepie@lbs.edu.ng

A. Ituma

Federal University Ndufu-Alike Ikwo, 2 Ngboejeogu Crescent, Abakalike, Ebonyi, Nigeria
e-mail: afamituma@yahoo.com

and little understood area of inquiry. This research gap is particularly problematic given that we live in an increasingly global economy. Moreover, it is necessary to gain deeper insights into the characteristics of the work, personal, and family life interface in Africa to guide social and business policy as there is undoubtedly a great socio-economic contrast between African countries and other national contexts in which most previous studies on work–family balance have been conducted (for example, Poelmans 2005; Houston 2005; Spector et al. 2004).

Most of the existing African research on work–family interface has been carried out in South Africa (recent examples include: De Klerk and Mostert 2010; Stey and Koekemer 2011). We should not assume that findings of these extant studies in Africa will necessarily generalize to all parts of the continent due to important cultural differences. It is logical to expect cultural differences in attitudes relating to work–family issues.

The overall objective of this chapter is, therefore, to contribute a West African perspective to the wider discourse on work–family interface and extend current conceptualizations in this area. The chapter specifically focuses on the work–family balance issues that individuals and organizations face in the context of Nigeria, nicknamed *the giant of Africa*, and more particularly in Lagos, the business capital and, with a population of 10.2 million (Central Intelligence Agency 2012), the largest and busiest city of the country. The overall aim of this chapter is to explore and analyze: (i) how much time Lagosians spend for working and commuting; (ii) in the case of those who spend much longer hours at work than those specified in their work contract, the reasons for doing so; (iii) the kind of work–family conflict Lagosians experience and its impact on their wellbeing; and, (iv) the impact of excessively long work hours on employees' stress and turnover intentions, both of which are bound to have an impact on productivity and employee costs. It is envisaged that the findings will: (i) provide valuable empirical data to help decision making on public policy; (ii) be useful to those with practical responsibility for the management of people in organizations in Nigeria; and (iii) stimulate further research on this topic.

The remainder of the chapter is organized as follows: Firstly, a brief review of the literature is presented. Secondly, the study is located within the Nigerian context. Thirdly, an overview of the research method adopted is discussed. The penultimate section presents our findings. The final section concludes with a discussion of the findings and a review of the implications for governmental and organizational policy makers.

Literature Review

It has been argued that a culture of long hours, heavy workloads, and lack of flexibility in the use of time provoke a stressful conflict between work and private life for many employees (Cooper 1998). It is generally accepted in the literature

that hours of work are *excessive* if they add up to more than 48 h per week (Messenger 2006). In their meta-analytic review of research on hours worked and health, Sparks et al. (1997) noted small but significant correlations between the number of hours worked and psychological and physical health symptoms; they showed that long working hours are associated with increased errors, workplace injuries and health problems. Thus, long hours reduce workers' productivity as well as their well-being (Shepard and Clifton 2000). Summarizing previous research, Burke (2006) reports that long hours lead to: lower productivity, increased work place injuries and errors, increased levels of ill health, and work–family conflict. The bad business consequences of the first three items above are self-evident. By contrast, work–family conflict might be thought of as the exclusive concern of each employee. There is, however, abundant evidence of its negative impact on employee well-being and performance at work in Western contexts (for example, Grzywacz et al. 2005; Anderson et al. 2002). Poelmans and Sahibzada (2004) provide a thorough literature review showing that work–family conflict, defined by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985:77), as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect,” tends to lead to higher levels of stress, lower employee commitment, greater turnover intentions and lower job satisfaction, all of which have an impact on the quantity or the quality of work.

Work–family conflict can take two directions: work interfering with family (work-to-family conflict), and family interfering with work or family-to-work conflict (Frone et al. 1992). Work-to-family conflict has been found to be linked to turnover intentions, stress and lack of job satisfaction, while family-to-work conflict is correlated to absenteeism as well as stress (Anderson et al. 2002). Whatever the direction taken, work–family conflict affects employees' well-being and their work performance, with the natural consequences on organizational outcomes. Yet corporate culture tends to remain attached to the ideal of segmentation, meaning the strict separation of work and family, and to ignoring the reality of spill-over in the lives of very many people for whom the satisfactions or frustrations experienced in the work domain affect the family domain and vice versa (Guest 2001). The prevalent *face time* mentality at all management levels equates presence with commitment. Not surprisingly, employees fear that going home at the official close of work or showing reluctance to put in extra hours at weekends will stigmatize them in the eyes of their supervisors and co-workers (Fredriksen-Goldsen and Scharlach 2001). In Nigeria, two quantitative studies have looked at the relationship between organizational work–family culture, physical and psychological well-being, work–family conflict and other variables, concluding that employees of organizations with a more family-friendly culture tend to enjoy higher psychological wellbeing together with a lower level of work–family conflict. Turnover intentions are also lower than those of employees within a harsher type of culture (Epie 2007, 2010).

Work–family conflict can be time-based (lack of time to juggle between the work domain and the family domains, or timing clashes between both domains) or

stress-based (high stress from one domain interfering with the ability to handle the other domain). Research among 11 organizations in Nigeria indicates that, within the same industry, organizations in which time-based or stress-based work-to-family conflict is higher register lower levels of organizational commitment and trust in management as well as higher levels of stress and turnover intentions (Epie 2011). It is clear therefore that the amount of extra time work absorbs to the detriment of one's family obligations has a negative impact on organisations. This is in harmony with the work of Poelmans and Sahibzada (2004).

Evbuoma (2007), in a survey of female employees from the most varied organizations in Nigeria including state ministries, secondary schools, universities, hospitals, manufacturing concerns, and banks, found that women workers who benefited from family-friendly support services achieved higher performance than those who did not (using a self-report measure of performance); these women were protected from the negative impact of excessively long work hours. Another interesting Nigerian study is that of Amah (2010) whose results confirmed that work-family policies have the potential to reduce the experience of work-family conflict if organizations provide a work environment favorable to their use. Abundant anecdotal evidence is available and some qualitative studies have been carried out to understand what Lagosians experience while juggling the various aspects of their lives (Epie 2009a, b) and the problems faced by bank employees in the management of their work-family interface (Mordi et al. work under review). There has, however, up to now, been no empirical quantitative study to examine the extent of the problem of long work hours in Lagos and to explain why employees agree to work much longer hours than those set by the law. Hence, the need to undertake research to better understand how long employees work each day and why. The following section examines the characteristics of the Nigerian context.

The Nigerian Context

A recurring theme in the literature on international management has been the impact of national context on management practices and individual behavior. As noted above there has, however, been a preponderance of Western-based work-family studies. It could be argued that the Anglo Saxon Western-based contexts (particularly the United States context in which most extant studies have been framed) are characterized by high levels of wealth, strong corporate governance, and government commitment to rule of law (Aguilera and Jackson 2003). Drawing from institutional theory (Scott 2008), it could be argued that companies and individuals operating in other national contexts are likely to be exposed to different sets of factors which affect their management practices (cf. Lee et al. 2011). Thus, analyzing the significant contextual characteristics that prevail in a country is important given that the unique history and socio-economic environment of a

nation can produce disparate socially constructed realities which shape and constrain the behavior of individuals and firms in the country. Some of the key factors that are likely to affect the interface of work and other life domains in Nigeria are discussed below. Firstly, we provide a general overview of Nigeria.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is a former British colony that obtained its independence in 1960. It is a West African coastal country that shares boundaries with Chad Republic and the Republic of Cameroon in the east, Niger Republic in the north, and the Gulf of Guinea in the south (Central Intelligence Agency 2012). The population is estimated at about 170 million (July 2012 estimate), with 40.9 % aged 0–14 years, 55.9 % between the ages of 15 and 64, and only 3.1 % over the age of 65 (Central Intelligence Agency 2012). While the average GDP per capita (PPP) is US\$2,600 (2011 estimate), 70 % of the population lives below poverty levels, having steadily risen over the 34 % registered in 1992. The country is made up of 36 States and a Federal Capital Territory. In 1991, the capital was moved from Lagos to Abuja—a purpose-built city. Lagos, however, remains the largest commercial hub. Nigeria is a diverse society with over 250 ethnic groups, although the official language is English. The most widely spoken native languages are Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa.

Like most African countries, Nigeria's culture is collectivist: an individual's identity is tied to a group (extended family, tribe). Nigeria constitutes a strongly male-dominated society (Omololu 1997). A gendered division of work prevails. Running one's own home is the woman's responsibility, even though she may employ male helpers to cook, do the laundry or clean the house (Gannon 2004). As many urban women are in some form of paid employment, they face a heavy workload on two fronts. Under the pressure of modern life, gender roles are slowly evolving. While more and more women occupy managerial positions alongside their male counterparts, few men are willing to assume a substantial share in household chores. Nigeria's culture is one of high status consciousness. Except in very modern, high-technology environments, the use of first names is not habitual and great care is taken to address senior people by the appropriate title (Ovadje and Ankomah 2001). High status people usually like to display their wealth or their status symbols (four-wheel drive vehicles, chieftaincy coral beads, etc.). The occupational distribution of the Nigerian people is, by and large, conjectural, as a high proportion of the population earns a living in the informal sector of the economy. It is estimated that, of a labor force of approximately 50.5 million (2010 estimate), 70 % are engaged in agriculture, 20 % in services, and 10 % in industry (Central Intelligence Agency 2012).

Conditions of employment are still regulated by the Labor Act (1974), although a revision of the legislation is foreseen in the near future. The provisions of this law concern mainly blue-collar workers and are very basic. Daily hours of work are to be fixed by mutual agreement or by collective bargaining (section 13, 1). If the working day is longer than 6 h, rest intervals of no less than 1 h in total must be allowed (section 13, 3). There must be 1 day of rest per week (section 13, 7). After 12 months of continuous service, every worker is entitled to an annual leave

of at least 6 working days; this leave may be deferred by mutual agreement between the employer and the worker, but no longer than another 12 months (section 18). Women are entitled to 12 weeks maternity leave with no less than half pay. The customary benefits are more generous, with 2–3 weeks annual leave, full-pay maternity leave, and a 2-day weekend. Working conditions for white-collar employees at all levels are a matter of individual negotiation between employer and employee unless there is a union, in which case the union negotiates with the employer on behalf of its members. Collective agreements are intended to be binding on both parties. The Nigerian Supreme Court has, however, repeatedly ruled that collective agreements are enforceable only when their terms and conditions are incorporated into every employee's contract of employment.

There is no public social security because of the historical role of the extended family in providing for the old, the sick, and the needy; yet the extended family support system is being eroded through the influence of Western culture, rising consumerism and the dramatic reduction in real incomes over the past 30 years. The need for structural adjustment and the drive for privatization and recent government intervention in the governance of banks have led to large-scale retrenchment exercises. Oil companies are making growing use of contract work in a bid to reduce their employee-related costs and union demands. Unemployment is on the increase, having risen from 19.7 % in 2009 to 21.1 % in 2010, and 23.9 % in 2011, but it is lower in urban areas (17.1 %) particularly in Lagos State where only 8.5 % of the active population is affected (National Bureau of Statistics 2012). The overall implication of these factors is that the importance individuals attach to work–family balance is likely to be shaped by the prevailing economic conditions and the socio-cultural values embedded in this context.

As has been the case in the Western world for years, work intensification has become a widespread phenomenon in Nigerian cities, driven and controlled by technological developments. Cell phones not only *enable* employees to keep in touch with customers and bosses, but often *force* them to do so. Blackberries not only *enable* people to make good use of time outside the office but also *oblige* them to be *on duty* in any place and at any time. The 8 h working day has become in many organizations a fictional concept and the official work hours indicated in employees' conditions of service remain a dead letter.

The environment is another source of pressure. Bad roads make traffic chaotic. Road construction works bring the promise of a brighter future but also the immediate—albeit temporary—experience of frustrating bottlenecks. Add to all of the above the problems of power and water shortages, the financial and other demands from the extended family, and you get a picture of some of the pressures bearing upon Nigerians and the frustrations they may feel when trying to satisfy their legitimate aspirations to a happy, fulfilling personal and family life.

Research Methods

Survey Instrument

A survey methodology was deemed the most appropriate to collect data giving its usefulness in examining the frequency of occurrence of a phenomenon or variable, and also for testing the existence of relationships between variables of interest. The questionnaire used in this study began with questions to gather demographic information relevant to an African population (age, gender, industry, job level, marital status, number of children below the age of 18, number of relatives living with them, number of relatives being financially supported).

The survey instrument continued with open questions about the number of hours worked *per week* on average, and the time spent commuting daily. Then respondents who worked extra hours were asked to select their reasons for doing so on a list of 11 items such as “I do it by choice”, “I am worried about losing my job” or “It is necessary to meet deadlines.” They were also asked how their journey to and from work affected the stress of their day. One question enquired to what extent line managers were sympathetic when respondents needed time off or wished to reschedule work around their family and caring responsibilities.

With regard to stress, respondents were asked: (i) whether they experienced stress; and, (ii) whether they ever felt their working life was out of control, all of the time, almost all the time, sometimes, rarely or never. They were also asked whether they had, in the previous 12 months, suffered from ill health that they felt was related to stress at work; if the answer was positive, they were to indicate what this entailed on a list of 12 stress symptoms, such as anxiety or panic attacks, frequent or unexplained crying, increased smoking or drinking, or a life-threatening problem (such as stroke or heart attack). Further questions enquired whether respondents had ever sought help with these problems within or outside their organization and, if so, how they evaluated the effectiveness of the help received.

The work-to-family conflict scale (Carlson et al. 2000) contained eight questions and distinguished between time-based conflict (for example, “I wish I had more time to do things for the family” or “My time off work does not match other family members’ schedule well”) and stress-based conflict (for example, “I feel physically drained when I get home from work” or “Work makes me too tired or irritable to participate in or enjoy family life”); the two parts of the scale had a Cronbach Alpha of 0.85 and 0.84, respectively, which indicates a high level of reliability. Perceptions of organizational support—a scale derived from the work of Allen (2001) and Clark (2001), with a Cronbach Alpha of 0.79—were captured by five questions (for example “My organization really cares about my wellbeing” and “Help is available from my firm if I have a problem”). Ten questions derived from the work of Thompson et al. (1999) with a Cronbach Alpha of 0.89 investigated the organizational work-family culture; sample questions were “Long hours inside the office are the way to achieving advancement” and “It is assumed that the most productive employees are those who put their work before their

family.” The affective commitment scale (adapted from Ovadje 1996) included five questions and had a Cronbach Alpha of 0.72, which indicates an acceptable level of reliability; sample questions were “I feel very loyal to this organization” and “I am quite proud to be able to tell people who it is I work for.” All these scales were of the Likert type, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Turnover intention was measured by two questions, “I am considering moving to a less stressful job” and “In the past 6 months I have been on the lookout for a better job elsewhere,” derived from Poelmans et al. (2003) and designed to be answered on a 5-point Likert scale.

A questionnaire for spouses was designed on the same pattern as the work–family conflict scale administered to the principal respondents, but the questions were asked from the spouse’s point of view (for example, “I wish my spouse had more time to do things for the family” and “I see my spouse emotionally drained when he/she gets home from work”). This would serve to validate the responses of the principal respondents. Two other questions were added: “I believe heavy job demands have a negative impact on the quality of our relationship” and “I wish we would spend more time together”, in order to capture something of the impact of the respondent’s work life on the couple’s relationship.

Sample

Our sample was drawn from residents of Lagos—the financial capital of Nigeria. Lagos was selected because it is the business capital of Nigeria and has the largest concentration of working class people, which would facilitate data distribution and collection. Respondents consisted of lawyers, senior managers, and chief executives enrolled on a management training program of a top business school in Nigeria and some of their non-managerial staff. Participants in the management program took the survey instrument to fill in and return it 1 week later; some of them asked for additional questionnaires to distribute to some of their employees whom they thought would like to be part of the project. Participation was voluntary and questionnaires were to be filled in anonymously.

Of the 300 questionnaires distributed, only 156 usable questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 52 %, which can be considered good for this type of survey. Table 4.1 provides a summary of the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The sample included 19 chief executives officers, 113 managers (including lawyers with managerial responsibilities in their legal chambers), and 24 non-managerial white-collar workers from various sectors of the economy. The banking/finance/insurance sector was the largest single sector representing 35 % of the respondents, followed by shipping/logistics with 8 %, manufacturing with 7 %, information technology with 5 %, the health sector with 4.5 % and law, energy, and advertising with 4 % each, the remaining 28.5 % forming a miscellaneous category including education, real estate, and other areas of business activities. There were 115 men (74 %) and 41 women (26 %). The vast

Table 4.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

Demographic characteristic	<i>N</i>	Percent (%)
<i>Job level</i>		
Chief executive officer	19	12
Managers and lawyers	113	73
Non-managerial, middle level staff	24	15
<i>Industry</i>		
Miscellaneous	44	28.5
Banking/finance/insurance	55	35.0
Shipping/logistics	12	88.0
Manufacturing	11	7.0
Information technology	8	5.0
Health	7	4.5
Law	6	4.0
Energy	6	4.0
Advertising	6	4.0
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	115	74
Female	41	26
<i>Marital status</i>		
Married	140	90
Widowed	4	2.0
Single	12	8.0
<i>Number of children below 18 years</i>		
3–6 Children	62	40
1–2 Children	72	46
No children	22	14
<i>Number of relatives helped financially</i>		
10–20	9	6.0
5–9	55	35.0
1–4	65	41.0
None	27	18.0

majority of them (90 %) were married, 12 % were single, and 2 % widowed. Only 14 % had no child below the age of 18; 40 % had one or two children, and 46 % had between three and six children. Most of them (82 %) provided financial help to relatives. Of the spouses, 132 returned usable questionnaires.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. This involved calculation of frequency scores and statistical tests of significance, namely Pearson correlation coefficient and paired-sample *t*-tests.

Research Findings

Nuclear and Extended Family Obligations

Respondents were asked about the number of their children below the age of 18. Responses therefore do not reveal specifically the size of the family but only the number and presence of small or adolescent children. Responses show that 40 % of the sample had three to six children below the age of 18. Another 46 % had one or two children in the specified age range, and 14 %—including married and single employees—had no children younger than 18. Nuclear family size seemed therefore moderate, considering the fertility rate (2010 estimate) of 5.6 children per woman in Nigeria (World Bank 2012). Apart from the expense and work involved in maintaining and educating their own children, Nigerians—like other Africans—have responsibilities toward the extended family. In the sample surveyed, 42 % had one or two relatives living with them and 12 % had three to seven relatives. The presence of relatives in a Nigerian home cannot, however, be evaluated merely as a financial load. It is also an important family resource as everyone is expected to help in the running of the household and less privileged relatives from the village are often brought to the city to serve as domestic assistants at the same time as they go to school or receive some vocational training. This is an instance of a mutual benefit between extended family members.

The fact that 46 % of respondents had no relative living with them does not mean that the extended family made no claim. Of all respondents, 41 % was financially helping one to four relatives, 35 % was helping five to nine relatives, and 6 % was helping 10–15 relatives. Only 18 % was not helping anyone financially; yet, this percentage seemed very high to a large group of Nigerian managers with whom these results were shared—it was believed that in reality it should be a much smaller proportion that would be free from financial obligations toward the extended family.

Hours Worked Per Week

The number of hours worked in a typical week ranged from 30 to 91 h, with a mean of 53.5 h. Only 14 % of respondents never or seldom worked more than the official hours. More than two-third of them (69 %) worked excessively long hours (i.e., more than 48 h per week). Of these, 44 % worked in the banking/finance/insurance sector, 10 % in manufacturing and the rest in a wide range of sectors such as telecommunications, shipping, education, services, information technology, and others.

Reasons for Working Long Hours

Respondents were asked to give, in order of priority, three reasons for working long hours. Of those who usually work 49 h or more per week (i.e., 107 respondents), 27 (25 %) stated they do so because they enjoy their job—though this is the *main* reason for only 4 of them (5 %). A larger number—46 (43 %) say they do it by choice. For most of them, however, this simply means that they are not compelled but freely decide to do it in view of the same circumstances that make many of their colleagues feel obliged to work long hours. What are those circumstances? For the majority, the volume of work is the main culprit (65 %), coupled with the necessity to meet tight deadlines (60 %). For 25 % of respondents, it is only after normal work hours that one has time to think. For many, long hours are also perceived as part of the organizational culture (21 %). While only 13 % feel pressurized by management, another 10 % think that working long hours is necessary to get ahead in their career and 4 % do it for fear of losing their job.

Impact of Commuting Time and Long Working Hours on Health and Wellbeing

Commuting time ranged from a few minutes to 6 h. Nearly, half of the respondents—63 (47 %)—spent 3–6 h in the traffic on a typical day, and only nine (7 %) spent less than an hour. As many as 35 % of respondents stated that their journey to and from work greatly added to the stress of their day, and another 42 % considered it added only slightly to the stress, while 23 % estimated it had no impact, or it even reduced their stress. Stress was defined as the difficulty to cope with work demands that endangered the person's health as a result. Only 4 % of respondents working *excessive* hours never or rarely experienced such difficulty. Another 74 % experienced it sometimes, 21 % almost all the time and 1 % all the time.

More than two-thirds (68 %) of respondents working excessive hours had suffered in the previous 12 months from ill health which they felt was related to stress at work. This entailed: fatigue (52 %), migraines (37 %), series of persistent minor ailments (31 %), irritability with colleagues, family, and/or friends (25 %), sleeplessness (20 %), anxiety attacks (19 %), lack of concentration (17 %), loss of appetite (12 %), and depression (12 %). Over 62 % had experienced from three to nine such problems in the previous 12 months. They were twice more likely to suffer from anxiety attacks and lack of concentration than those working more moderate hours, and 30 % more likely to suffer from fatigue, irritability, and persistent minor ailments.

Work-to-Family Conflict

Of all those working more than 48 h a week, 38 % had a high score in all four measures of time-based work–family conflict but only 9 % in the case of stress-based work-to-family conflict. The proportion rises to 59 and 37 %, respectively, when considering also those whose scores were high on at least three of the measures. Business leaders may shrug their shoulders when they are told that 80 % of respondents working excessive hours wish they had more time for their family and 77 % feel they do not have enough time for themselves: after all, they cannot expect to make a good living while spending lots of time at home. We get, however, a glimpse of an objective problem when we find out that, for as many as 48 %, their time off work does not match well with other family members' schedules. The fact that 74 % of them habitually feel physically drained and 43 % emotionally drained when they get home from work is worth noting because it is doubtful that they are able to recover overnight and return to work refreshed on the following day; surely fatigue, irritability, anxiety, and lack of concentration will have a negative impact on performance.

It is interesting to note that the *t*-tests revealed substantial agreement between spouses in their assessment of the employee's time-based work–family conflict. There was also substantial agreement as to whether the employee was physically or emotionally drained when returning from work, which validates employees' self-report assessments. On other points, the difference between spouses' perceptions was statistically significant. Employees generally saw themselves as less irritable and better able to participate in and enjoy family life than their respective spouses perceived them to be ($p < 0.02$), and had a more favorable estimation of the patience they manifested with their children ($p < 0.001$). Spouses also felt more strongly that the employee should perhaps work less and spend more time with the children ($p < 0.001$).

Supervisor Support

Fortunately, the vast majority of supervisors/managers (93 %) showed a level of sympathy when someone needed time off or wished to reschedule work around family and caring responsibilities.

Organizational Culture

Perceptions of organizational culture are positive in the majority of cases. It is encouraging to see that one-third of those working excessively long hours still perceive that their organization offers them some flexibility as a strategic way of

doing business. Less than 25 % consider that they are, however, given ample opportunity to perform both their job and their personal responsibilities well.

Turnover Intentions

Of all respondents, 28 % have been seriously considering moving to a less stressful job, and 18 % have been on the lookout for a better job during the past 6 months.

Where Does Help Come From?

Of all respondents, only 29 % felt habitually in control of their life. Others feel out of control sometimes (29 %), often (38 %) or even most of the time (4 %). Do they seek help? Of those who felt out of control over their life at least sometimes, 51 % seek help from outside, mostly from their doctor, with a small minority turning to spouse, family, or spiritual advisors for support, and this help is generally considered effective. A few respondents (9 %) have looked for help within the organization, mostly from their line manager, or some other senior manager rather than from the human resources (HR) department, and this help is considered effective in a small majority of cases. The rest (40 %) do not seek help but simply try to draw on their own internal resources.

Impact of Work–Family Conflict on Turnover Intentions

Among those working more than 50 h per week, time-based, and stress-based work–family conflict are highly and significantly correlated to the feeling of loss of control over one’s life ($r = 0.546$ and 0.646 respectively, $p < 0.001$), which is in turn significantly correlated to turnover intentions ($r = 0.491$, $p < 0.001$). These correlations are just as statistically significant, but lower in intensity, in the total sample, indicating that excessively long work hours trigger an escalation of the problem of work–family conflict and loss of control over one’s life, inclining the employee to look for a better job.

Implications

The percentage of people working excessively long hours sends a danger signal. It is particularly important to recognize that an employee’s productivity is likely to

be affected by the law of diminishing returns toward the end of the official 8 h work per day. Add to this the time spent commuting daily in the Lagos traffic, and it becomes clear that the employees in our sample have little opportunity to recover from their work stress from 1 day to the next. Their personal and family life suffers, which further increases stress.

When considering employees' reasons for working long hours it is evident that the majority of respondents in our survey work long hours because of the volume of work and tight deadlines. Among other things this calls for strategies to address the perceived HR constraints in many companies and to enhance employees' ability to complete regular assignments during normal working hours and within set deadlines. While working overtime or taking on more work can, at times, be necessary and/or unavoidable, the problem arises when it becomes a permanent feature of a job or is perceived as part of the organizational culture. Essentially, long hours on the job are not a sign of high productivity and, indeed, organisations would do well to implement the well-known (but poorly applied) saying "*work smarter, not harder.*" For example, intense work for 7 h a day would be more productive than moderate work for 5 h followed by sluggish work during the next 4, 5 or 6 h. A possible solution to the need to reduce commuting time would be the adoption of staggered working hours—a system implemented by only a very small number of organizations in Lagos. Commuting time tends to be very long, not so much because of distances as because of bottlenecks blocking traffic in the mornings and the evenings. With a critical mass of organizations implementing staggered work hours, roads would be less congested as traffic would be more evenly spread out throughout the morning hours, then again throughout the afternoon and evening hours. This system can, however, only work if the official number of hours per day is respected. Otherwise why should an employee agree to start work earlier—say, at 6.30 a.m.—if he or she will still be expected to remain late in the office?

Implications for Business Leaders

Can appropriate support be given to employees? It is noteworthy that less than one-third of respondents feel in control of their life, and that, out of the two-thirds who experience loss of control sometimes or often, only 9 % seek help from their organization, approaching their line manager or some other senior manager rather than the HR department. The HR function does not seem to be perceived as a defender of employee welfare but mostly as a representative of top management. It is therefore important for business leaders to take steps to make their HR managers know that they are expected to combine and reconcile both perspectives.

The high level of work–family conflict is a danger signal to organizational leaders, not only because of its direct negative impact on productivity, but also because of its relationship with turnover intentions. The survey indicates that excessive work hours escalate the problem of work–family conflict and loss of

control over one's life, inclining the employee to look for a better job. It is noteworthy that replacing a good employee can be an expensive exercise considering recruitment and induction costs as well as learning curve characteristics. Even if the person does not actually leave the job, the desire for change and the search for better conditions entail considerable expenditure in terms of time and even materials, as employees browse the net for job offers, prepare their CVs and print them on office stationery—all during working hours—thus getting distracted from their assigned tasks. It is also well-documented, as revealed by the literature review section, that excessively long hours lead to lower productivity, more injuries, more errors, and higher levels of ill health. Thus, any attempt to boost productivity without the expense of higher technology and to lower employee-related costs needs to address the issue of work–family conflict if it is to be successful and sustainable. Unfortunately, business leaders are often impervious to this type of reasoning, and appropriate legislation would be helpful if substantial change is to take place.

Implications for Public Policy

As seen from the reviewed literature, individuals who effectively manage multiple roles are often effective at work, contribute to their firm's profitability and achieve satisfaction and fulfillment in personal life, which facilitates the sustained economic and social development of a nation. Thus, given the potential negative consequences of work–family conflict for individuals and firms, it can be argued that there is need for more proactive government intervention in ensuring a worker-friendly environment and the enactment of family-responsible policies that will help employees reduce and better manage their work and non-work role conflicts.

Socially responsible town planning should be high among the Nigerian government's concerns. There should be various residential areas within the reach of all purses around the main business districts of cities, in order to reduce distances between employees' work place and their home. Appropriate infrastructure, road maintenance, and public transport services should be provided to reduce excessively long commuting time.

The ability of parents to get personally engaged in their children's upbringing to form them as responsible and honest citizens who will constitute the next generation of active workforce should also be among the top concerns of governments. Essentially, the enhancement of the educational role of the family is, in the long term, more effective than a strong police force in ensuring peace and respect for the law throughout the country. Legislation is thus needed to protect employees at all levels from excessively long work hours. While one cannot guarantee that employees will effectively spend their new-found spare time with their family, at least one can ensure that they are all given the opportunity to do so. The encouragement of self-employment is another avenue that can be used to assist workers' integration of economic activities with family responsibilities.

Conclusion

This chapter reported the results of an empirical quantitative study on long work hours and work–family conflict in Lagos, the commercial capital of Nigeria. It is clear that a considerable percentage of employees in the Lagos metropolis spend a disproportionate amount of their time and energy in commuting to and from work, and in the work place. It is also clear that many experience disruptive levels of stress while few seek help from their organization. The reasons given for working long hours suggest problems related to the management style and the culture of organizations. Stress-related problems, work–family conflict, a feeling of loss of control over one’s life, and a desire to leave the organization were all associated with excessively long work hours. Recommendations were made to business organizations, such as the introduction of staggered work hours, reasonable deadlines, and the recruitment of a sufficient number of people to habitually do the job within normal work hours, an effort to eliminate the long hour syndrome which forms part of the organizational culture in many places, together with effective time management training throughout the organization. An appeal is made to organizational leaders to provide the necessary support to their staff so that their organization may benefit from higher performance by distress-free employees. The chapter highlighted implications for public policy, such as appropriate legislation and town planning to ensure a more worker-friendly environment and protection of the family institution. Overall, we believe our study contributes to the development of a better understanding of the work–family and work–life issues that confront individuals in the Nigerian context, and possibly also in other major cities of the African continent.

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