
REALITIES OF WORK LIFE BALANCE IN NIGERIA: PERCEPTIONS OF ROLE CONFLICT AND COPING BELIEFS

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Abstract. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of Work-Life Balance (WLB) practices in a developing nation of Nigeria. Evidently, on the threshold of widened globalization propensities, work-life research is beginning to spread outside the western context. Thus, a qualitative approach was employed by conducting 61 in-depth interviews with Nigerian employees (41 women and 20 men) working in frontline employments in the banking, telecommunications and insurance sectors about their perceptions of WLB. The findings showed that though conflict situations existed more than work-family enrichment, but under different circumstances due to the long legacy of national challenges facing Nigeria. The apparent role conflicts have generated various coping strategies adapted by participants of study to moderate their perceived work-life conflict and this paper seeks to add to the compendium of WLB discourse on a global scale by examining key barriers detected to hinder its workable practices in Nigeria.

Keywords: work-life balance, Nigeria's challenges, role conflict, coping strategies.

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1. Introduction

Over the years, there has been growing academic repertoires in work-life research showcasing the relevance, impact and challenges of Work-Life Balance practices in developing contexts (Baral, Bhargava 2010; Epie 2009; Fayankinnu, Alo 2007) and this paper equally draws from this widened publicity in exploring the social realities of WLB experiences in Nigeria. Historically, Work-Life Balance discourses were potentially high profile topical issues in most advanced economies such as U.S.A, Australia and diverse European contexts and it is common theme in such western discourses that employees are required to consolidate their efforts in finding the right mix between their work and non-work roles while organizations are scrutinized to implement a variety of WLB solutions such flexible working, job sharing, telecommuting, compressed hours, part-time, maternity benefits and so on to foster workplace performance. However, it

is also important to state that despite the robust frameworks of WLB practices in this developed countries, there still exist growing gaps between the ideal and the real WLB situations in this advanced regions due to social, economic and labour-market pressures manifesting through long working hours culture, changing demographics and global recessions which is still rendering negative spillovers in people's work-life integration (Bond 2004; Crompton, Lyonette 2006; Sanse'au, Smith 2012).

Nigeria, like other nations of the world also faces economic challenges and labour market pressures. However, the wide difference causing most problems in Nigeria is leadership based. For instance, some national specific issues influencing our political, economic and social status as a nation ranges from the apparent leadership failures resulting in poor social infrastructures, poverty, high unemployment and corruption (Okpara, Wynn 2007; Okogbule 2007; Ampratwum 2008). It is mind burling to imagine how these excruciating societal externalities fustigate the work and family life of an average Nigerian worker who is out to make a living and may have to strenuously develop supportive networks, as well as cognitive psychological coping behaviours that engenders desirable gratification and effective functioning at work and home (Clark 2000). Thus, with this high tension and disturbing circumstances found in the nation, this paper is set out to contribute to knowledge in respect to how Nigerians cope with the adverse working conditions in light of the negative interactions they appear to encounter in harmonising their work and family or private life domains. Thus, the aim of this paper is to investigate to what extent are WLB agenda a social reality in Nigeria. This study further highlights the coping strategies that may have been adopted by Nigerian workers through their perception of major sources of conflict experiences in their work-life interface. This paper also examines gender stereotypes, with reference to factors that impede Nigerian female workers from effective employment participation and good management of their home affairs. However, presenting an overview of the Nigerian society as a whole, the nation is regarded as one of the most populous countries in Africa (Okpara 2006) with an explosive population of about 146 million with diverse ethnic grouping of over 250 ethnic groups (CIA World Factbook 2010).

The official language is English but the country has over 503 indigenous languages making Nigeria infused with a rich socialization heritage with multi-faceted community groupings and vastness in religious affiliations. For instance, Nigeria's religious affiliation stands at 50% Muslim devotees, 40% Christians and 10% of the entire population engaged in indigenous beliefs. The workforce is estimated at 47.48 million with labour force by occupation at 70% in agriculture, 10% in industry and 20% services (CIA World Factbook 2010). The country's unemployment rate stands at 4.9% with a population under poverty line standing at 70% as at 2007 (CIA World Factbook 2010). This makes standard of living in Nigeria one of the poorest in the world with a GDP of 9.5% as at 2010 (CIA World Factbook 2010). Employment structures in Nigeria are broadly divided into two types. First, is formal employment which could either be in the public sector composed of government owned institutions, or private organisations owned by wealthy Nigerians or foreign investors. Second, is the informal economic sector with

entrepreneur indigenes engaging in self-employed businesses mostly on small medium scale (Okpara 2006). The terms and conditions of employment with exception to wages for both public and private organisations are regulated by the Nigerian Employment Act of 1971 which has minimal provisions for family responsive policies (Epie 2006).

2. Previous research conceptualising Work-Life Balance

Past and extant work-life research have often suggested that the effective management of the interface between work and domestic life remains a central challenge for employers and employees across various institutional contexts (Greenhuas, Collin, Shaw 2003; Valour 2007; Baral, Bhargava 2010). It is apparent that most WLB discussions over the decades have focused on the negative interactions often called 'role conflict' which mostly arises from incompatibility of activities between work and family domains (Greenhaus, Beutell 1985) and emphasises the idea that the interface between work and family is a zero-sum and depletory in nature (Edward, Rothbard 2000). However, scholarly views on work-life interface are meant to present a significant social reality on how paid labour and family or private life of an individual should be classified as less competing priorities and excessively demanding but rather complementary elements of a full life (Manfredi, Holliday 2004: 1–4). A. Felstead (2002) further suggested that WLB borders on a fair juxtaposition between "institutional and cultural times and spaces of work and non-work matters in societies where income is mainly created and distributed through labour markets" for the purposes of well-being and productivity. However, as earlier highlighted, the vast majority of research in work-life conflict seems to overshadow this salient reality as a result of some excruciating social encumbrance peculiar to various national contexts.

For instance, Work-life Conflict (WLC) discourses gained more prominence in the 1970s and 1980s as a result of increased women participation in employment which was marked by a period of increased market liberalisation especially in the western regions and accompanied with a surge in academic researches and public awareness of an upsurge in occupational stress and burnout experienced by this working mothers in the bid to harmonise their work-family status (Lewis, Cooper 1999). This resulted into role pressures whereby participation in one role was made more difficult by participation in other roles, such as work and family (Roche, Haar 2010; Shein, Chen 2011: 7–11). Furthermore, the emphasis on incompatible role demands at work-family levels was historically amplified by the scarcity hypothesis by Sieber (1974), which was inundated by antecedents that time and energy available within each role is finite and limited to meet the insatiable demands of both domains. In other words, the scarcity theory indicates the fact that there is a restrictive gauge on a person's physiological and psychological resources and as a result of this, competing demands encountered between work and domestic life degenerates into a tug-of-war experience where the involvement in one domain is usually at the expense of the other (Rondo, Carlson, Kincaid 2003; Roche, Haar 2010) which consequently generates negative outcomes like occupational stress,

burnout and health issues. However this study proposes that there are wider factors that amplify conflict experiences beyond the confines of individual circumstances and organisational work pressures which have been given narrow considerations within the work-life research which is subsequently unpacked in the next section of this paper.

2.1. Transcending factors generating most WLC situations

Role conflict at individual levels does not exist in a vacuum. Most often, external factors such as the socio-economic and cultural factors of any national context where the organisation operates seems to have influences on either the struggles or successes that workers experience in their capacity of finding a right mix in balancing their work and family life. It was found that more often than not, when making value judgments about behavioural patterns exhibited by people in respect to their social realities, researchers tend to underestimate the influence of external realities and overrate the influence of individualistic or micro factors in any given field of behavioural studies (Gartner 1995). For instance, in most developing societies, where national culture emphasizes patriarchal orientations (i.e. male dominance), this may amount to gender stereotypes which most often times have a negative impact on the female gender in employment. Such masculine model society relegate women to the background and in work-life matters, showcases sometimes the female gender as a perpetual home keeper and shouldered with almost all family responsibilities. It will be evident that role conflicts and pressures between roles are excruciating realities for such working mothers in these places (Agbalajobi 2010). Also, as earlier pointed out, the higher rates of labour market participation by women across various national contexts particularly women with family care needs have generally been the basis of role stress theories and interrole conflict discussions (Eby *et al.* 2005). Most of the stress-related outcomes such as burnout (Haar 2006) and drinking, and drug habits (Grunberg, Moore, Greenberg 1998), depression (Frone, Russell, Cooper 1992) as well as occupational-related outcomes such as absenteeism, turnover intentions and health problems (Hammer, Grandley 2003) are some end factors of the harmful impact of WLC.

2.2. Coping with Role Conflicts

As employees' face this expansive levels of stress from such surrounding factors in their environment, coping becomes inevitable. Such coping abilities can be described as an individual's approaches or methods employed to manage stressful situations encountered in role pressures from the work, family or private life (Beutell, Wittig-Berman 2008). Such coping efforts can be behavioral, cognitive or emotional levels of display (Lazarus, Folkman 1984). It has been suggested that the efficacy of such coping strategies is derived from one's acquisition and judicious use of physical and mental resources such as of time-management, rational energy-disbursement and emotional coping styles spread across both domains (Greenhaus, Powell 2006; Rotondo, Kincaid 2008). For instance, Lazarus, Folkman (1984) are authors well known for their transactional stress

model which conceptualises stress as the imbalances between levels of demands and resource availability. In such situations when pressures exceed an individual's perceived ability to manage results in reactive coping behaviours after appraisal of the situations in order to reduce or remove stressors (Lazarus, Folkman 1984).

There are various coping styles that have been theorized in research as ways people deal with stressful conditions. However, this study adopts the four well-known categories from Folkman, Moskowitz (2004) as follows: problem-solving approach, positive appraisal, assistance seeking and avoidance/surrender which are examined in turn. First, problem-solving approach coping occurs when efforts are geared towards resolving or proactively managing the problems that are causing distress. It may include active information gathering, planning and making decisions that proffer resolutions that deal directly with conflicts (Lazarus, Folkman 1984). This type of coping method may require resource consolidation that manages the underlying problem through some task-oriented decisions. Second, positive thinking suggests people managing stressful circumstances in a mentally optimistic manner. This is a more emotionally based-approach which refers to one's tendency to manage painful emotional reactions in a temperate manner especially when such conflict situations cannot be altered or changed momentarily (Herman-Stahl, Stemmier, Petersen 1995). Third, assistance seeking solutions presents a person's request for help in form of social support from friends, family and institutions in managing any potential role conflict. This kind of support may not totally eradicate the conflict affects but reduces it to a bearable state (Adams, King, King 1996; Rotondo, Kincaid 2008). Four, avoidance/surrender situation is where a person feels the need to respond to stressful circumstance by passively responding to situations with ill-feelings for purposes of immediate change the environment at cost. This coping method could be impulsive with the thinking that self-resignation to one's faith and passive acceptance of situation solves the adverse condition (Rotondo, Carlson, Kincaid 2003). Examples of such expressed coping situations are a marriage divorce due to misgivings between couples or voluntarily withdrawal from employment because of subjective opinions about an employer. Against this backdrop, this study further proceeds to investigate how Nigerians in the context of our study perceives and cope with imbalances between their work-family interfaces.

3. Methodology of Study

The integral part of this study drew epistemologically from the interpretive-constructionist perspective that emphasizes entering interactions with people in understanding the world's realities from their point of view (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill 2007: 100–131). Studies of this nature is mostly qualitative which are often effective in retrieving specific information about the opinions, values, behavioral patterns, and social contexts of a given population or sampled representation in any particular field of social interest. This resonates with the suggestions of Cohen, Mannion, Morrison (2011: 96–100) that qualitative study “gives voices to participants, and probes issues that lie beneath the

surface of their actions”. Against this backdrop, this study made use of a judgmental sample number of 61 employees drawn across the front offices of three sectorial (i.e. banking, telecommunications and motor insurance) companies in Lagos state, Nigeria. All the participants were workers that deal with customer based services and were often fully engaged in constant voice to voice or face to face contact with existing or potential customers of their respective companies. The frontline business considered in this study provided richer data because of intense labour encountered on a daily basis by this workers and it was interesting to realise the impact of this job characteristics had on the private or family lives of participants. The ages of respondents ranged from 25–50 years. Like most qualitative studies, interviews were the source of data collection method adopted in this study that was conducted in the Lagos state which is one the largest cosmopolitan regions in Nigeria and well known for the bee halve of commercial activities.

Majority of the interviews (53 in number) were conducted on site with respective front office workers with formal permission from their respective employers which was granted expeditiously because the study was not done at a managerial level. The other eight participants that made up the total number in study were solicited by a snowballing sample through e-mails and mobile phones given out by co- participants. A kind request was made by them for a telephone interviews at a more convenient time off site. The face-face and telephone interviews were all English based which lasted for 40-60 minutes, in-depth in nature beginning with a formal introduction of the topic under consideration, confidentiality matters understood and the interview process conducted. During the interview process, questions were modified depending on the answers generated from participants to reflect emerging theories from the data collected (Glaser, Strauss 1967). The only restrictions from employers was that tape recording were not allowed as company policy but detailed notes were allowed to be taken of which a contact form was used after each interview to collate all relevant themes generated from interviews. Apart from four divergent themes that emerged from four participants only, there was a large reoccurrence of similar themes of which after interviewing about 45 participants, the data did not generate any fresh insights or further distinctive themes but mere collaborations. However, for reliability of findings and ensuring that theoretical saturation was reached during the entire duration of research, all the other participants were given the same level of attention in the concurrent interviews making sure that all themes were unearthed, since analysis was carried out simultaneously and manually due to the manageable figure of participants. Since the interview questions were open-ended, much qualitative data was sourced for the conceptual framework analysis of study. On the contrary, a number of limitations also exist from the study. One of them is that the study emphasized on external factors affecting WLB in the Nigerian context without addressing views from the organisational perspective. This can however be justified given the overpowering conditions of the national challenges that participants vehemently blamed for the lack of workable WLB practices in Nigeria. The second limitation is the relatively small sample size with participants drawn from the three important sectors in

Nigeria. Also, the study was concentrated in only one state in Nigeria which consists of 33 states. However, the reason for conducting the study only in Lagos state was because of time and financial constraint. Also, the study adopted qualitative approach which makes perceptions of participants subjective and caution placed on generalisation of findings. Future studies are suggested to reach out to other states of Nigeria and quantitatively conducted to confirm the validity of the subjective commentary of such qualitative research.

3.1. Research Design

Grounded theory approach was employed for data analysis processes (Cresswell 2007) and the approach primarily aimed at “the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research” (Glaser, Strauss 1967: 2). Simply put, the approach unearths any explanatory logic, propositions or tentative insights intended to explain certain facts or observations emerging from data collected (Cresswell 2007: 79–82). This approach has been adopted in other different topical studies conducted in the Nigerian context (Ituma, Simpson, 2009; Mordi, Adedoyin, Ajonbadi 2012) and proven to be a reliable method. Thus, an illustrative design of Grounded theory strategy employed in this study is diagrammatised in Figure 1.

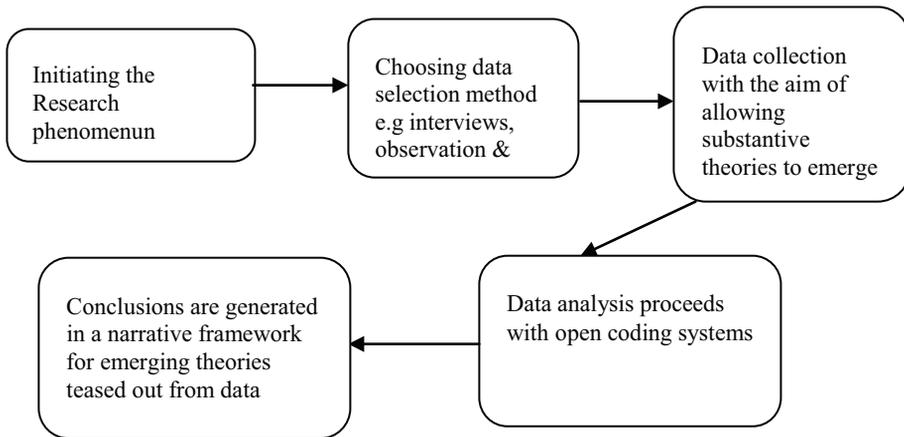


Fig. 1. A schematic framework of Grounded theory conceptualised by Glaser, Strauss 1967

Therefore, this current study produced 85 pages of verbatim transcribed interview data retrieved from participants. The data analysis began with coding the interview transcripts into theoretically derived categories. These focused on three dominant categories which were perceived to be factors causing imbalances between the participants work-life while various coping mechanisms were adapted to mediate such WLC situations. For instance, in the open coding systems adopted, the derived meaning of the above categories was distilled from a few words, sentences or paragraphs of transcribed data. For example, “the Nigerian government is the cause of the problem I experience at work and home...”; By the time I get to work I am already tired due to long traffic

because of the deplorable state of Nigerian roads...”; corruption is a big problem in the country...; This unit of data were consolidated and subsequently labelled to form a main category tagged: interconnectivity between national culture and individual WLB perception. Furthermore, units of data such as “...with all my stressful call-centre job and taking care of my four young children...I am still managing...”; “thanks for my mother-in-law...she is my support when I am gone to work...” this type of units discussions were collapsed and labelled under the core category of coping strategies adopted by Nigerians. Thus, the open coding employed in data analysis engaged in rigorous processes of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising the entire data while discoveries of the emerging theories were made below.

3.2. Discussions and Results of emerging theories from data

One salient proposition that emerged from the data collected from participants is the interactional situations causing their WLC circumstances. There was a prevailing misfit between the participants and their working environments as theorised by French (1973) but expounded beyond the immediate working environment to core issues of stressors emanating from the national culture (Lu, Cooper, Kao, Zhou 2003). In a nutshell, the theoretical framework for current study is presented in Figure 2.

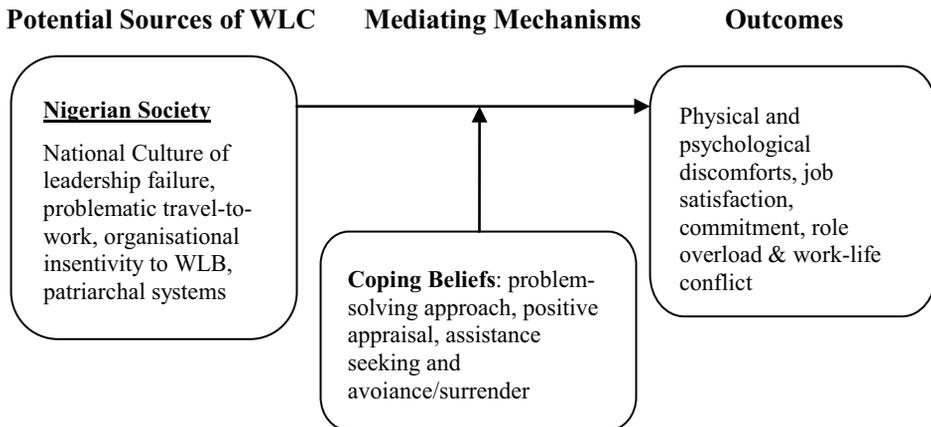


Fig. 2. Theoretical framework from data (Source: created by the author)

All the participants interviewed in this study expressed deep concerns regarding trends in the political, economic and social challenges facing Nigeria serving as primary sources of their work-life conflict (Fig. 2). One major gap in most WLB discourse is the concentration of researches at the Micro (individual) and Meso (organisational) levels while minimal studies relating the impact of the Macro systems levels on the Microsystems and Mesosystems (Klein, Tosi, Cannella 1999) remains under-theorized. Theory emerging from the data of this study suggested that conditions outside an organization and an individual’s sphere of life has a sizeable impact at influencing the fundamental realities derived from an individual’s capacity of coordinating obligations

at work and family levels with minimal conflict (Clark 2000). Though managing both domains for work productivity have been established to be a major challenge for employees and employers, the macro-environment factors of any national contexts are key drivers that can, to a greater or lesser extent, impact on the (in)effectiveness (Johnson, Scholes, Whittington 2006) of WLB practices and policies at individual and organizational levels. Applying the PESTEL framework, which theorizes that various environmental components, such as political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal (PESTEL) structures of any national contexts influences people's working patterns, standard of living and lifestyles (Johnson, Scholes, Whittington 2006). It also impacts on each organization within the wider industry and markets in which they operate. Therefore, in Nigeria's case, the participants were inclined to blame the country's deplorable macro-environmental components for the reason of lack of workable WLB practices and policies within the Nigerian organizations. For instance, one male cashiers working in the Bank amplified this point as follows:

Work life balance will only be recognised in my workplace and my life if the economic, political and social upheavals we experience in our country are eradicated or reduced. For instance, the culture of corruption that has eaten into the fabrics of the political and economic systems...

Cashier in one of the first generation banks in Nigeria

Some Nigerian authors suggested that different potential reasons of the system of public sleaze and lack of decorum that feeds corrupt practices in Nigeria is the love of ostentatious living and greed (Tiemo 2006; Okogbule 2007; Ampratwum 2008; Fajana 2008). The participants of this study attributed the negative impacts this failing culture has on working conditions and family as a whole. For instance, the Transparency International's (TI) reports in the past show that Nigeria's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) was four places up and "ranked above Chad, Bangladesh and Haiti showing that corruption is still a major problem" (Okpara, Wynn 2007). Thus, it was presented by Okpara and Wynn (2007) that the unethical practices amongst Nigerian managers which stem from the larger society impacts negatively on job satisfaction and commitment to work (Fig. 2). There were collaborations from almost all participants that labour and productivity agendas are fund-strapped thus incapacitating labour initiatives for workable WLB solutions because allocation and administration of funds for such WLB practices like social support, child care facilities, and leisure subsidies are most times misappropriated at private and public levels (Fajana 2008).

Also, interviewees in this study expressed displeasure with the poor state of social infrastructure because of leadership failures in Nigeria. Portable water, decent housing, constant electricity supply, good roads and functional transport systems are described to be a high profile luxury and unaffordable for an average Nigerian. The country's motorway were presented to be in a lamentable shape and participants expressed barriers of their ability to derive successful work-life balance because travel-to-work presents

much hassles. One of the interviewee commented thus:

Merely thinking of our bad roads is enough psychological stress...the bottleneck traffic, bad travel network, lack of traffic lights is worrisome...

Call-centre agent who is also a wife and a mother

To buttress this point on the impact that problematic travel-to-work has on employee's work-life balance, Wheatley (2012), suggested in his study that time-based conflict often emanates from these situations due to unnecessary periods spent in bottleneck traffics which deprives dual families promptness to work or attending to family responsibilities such as picking up their children from school promptly. In a similar vein, most interviewees of this study narrated similar collaborative versions relating to time-based conflict they encounter because of poor motoring facilities in Nigeria causing them unsatisfactory engagement in child care responsibilities (Allen 2001).

3.3. Role overload

An insightful discovery of emerging theme from data in this study was the fact that role overload was a main source of WLC for Nigerian women. It is evident that there are substantial amount of WLB studies devoted to the perception of gender differences relating to the role of men and women with regards family responsibilities and employment rights (Eby *et al.* 2005). For instance, in patriarchal societies such as Nigeria, the impact of role overload on women is challenging. This is in view of the realities of patriarchy in Nigeria that puts women in a position where family commitments come into serious conflict with their occupational life (Aziz, Cunningham 2008; Mordi, Simpson, Singh, Okafor 2010) while men tend to assume their primary role in the workforce as 'breadwinners' and thereby participating less in family responsibilities. It is common knowledge that Nigerian patriarchal system is essentially one of the major reasons women are subjected to serious work stress as well as family imbalances. For instance, one of the interviewee in this study, a working mother further collaborated thus:

I have three children ages 4, 7 and 9 years old. I am left to take care of family responsibilities alone because my husband works as a manager in one of our Nigerian banks and comes back very late most times from work and leaves very early before anyone wakes up...

Interviewee working in the insurance sector

Role overload in this context presents an overwhelming role demands which resonates with Greenhaus, Beutell's (1985) definition of work life conflict that stems from the stringent participation in both domains amounting to incompatibility outcomes. It is disheartening to see some extreme challenges that women face in managing their roles as mothers and home-maker especially in Nigeria where it is found that the socialization systems and cultural orientations favor the pursuit of men above their female counterparts (Mordi Adedoyin, Ajonbadi 2012).

4. Coping strategies

With regards to coping strategies, it was found that the primary way to eliminate stressful condition is through effective employment of coping strategies (Lazarus, Folkman 1984). Thus, the four established types of coping strategies in literature were employed in this study to find out how the Nigerian workers in the three sectors cope with the chronic nature of the stressors identified in this study. For instance, one of the male participants in this study had this to say regarding coping abilities:

What we experience is perpetual conflict in our lives because of the Nigerian situation and my employers have the mentality that WLB is my personal problem. But we are still surviving and living...at least my salary pays my household expenses which is ok for me... It seems as Nigerians we have been trained to endure hardship from birth...

Nigerian male banker

The expressions of the above male cashier working in one of the Nigerian banks resonates with the instrumental potential pathway theorized by Greenhaus, Powell (2006) in their enrichment model. The narrative of the participant above stated that he still manages to derive satisfaction from the fact that his job supports his family demands and thereby makes enrichment possible for him to some extent. It can also be deduced that cognitive survival (Cash, Gardner 2011), and personal hardiness are traits that have been developed as psychological and physical coping resource (Greenhaus, Powell 2006) by Nigerians because this same attitude was collaborated by another male participants of study. Hardiness is commonly taken to be a personality trait in which individuals' exercises levels of control and show enduring prowess in the face of adversity (Maddi 2008) as found in the case of Nigeria. This is also synonymous to the positive thinking coping theory which suggests personal decision to accommodate such stressful circumstances irrespective of the discomfort associated with it. In other words, this coping mechanism is found to be emotionally based approach of enduring abilities people develop which depicts tendencies to develop a thick skin against role pressures (Lazarus, Folkman 1984). Another emerging theme that evolved was that assistance seeking solutions of coping were found to be used effectively by the female participants in this study. Most of the married women in three sectors were found to outsource child care responsibilities to parents and relatives to help out when they are at work. Also, it emerged that it was common practice in Nigeria to employ the services of a house helps for household chores and general domestic labour. This house helps, mostly young females are recruited from poor rural areas where their parents may be poor and lack basic sources of livelihood to send their young female children to primary or secondary schools and would rather send them out to serve as domestic workers in the urban cities of Nigeria. This are often low paid services and informal in nature. One of the married respondents expressed the following:

It is unfortunate that most married women in Nigeria have to get poorly trained house helps for child care purposes...mostly village poor girls...

Female interviewee who is a bank cashier

It was discovered that the Nigerian structure of social support is informal in nature relying on friends, families and paid house helps. However, some concerned participants in our study confirmed the strain they go through obtaining this unstructured helps compulsorily. It emerged that some of this social support fails to moderate the effects of WLC but rather amplifies psychological stress and role overload (Frone, Rusell, Cooper 1992; Carlson, Perrew 1999). Be that as it may, it was surprising to note four divergent themes that emerged from interview data of this study which represented extreme views of frustration about the excruciating WLC experiences in Nigeria from four participants. One of them narrates his situation:

I am not happy with my WLB situation because my salary is too small relative to my living expenses in Lagos. It seems I work so hard and live so little...I am 38 years and still single because I cannot save enough money to have a decent wedding. I do not think I can ever marry with this Nigerian situation. I am the only one who has a job in family...my other four siblings are still job seekers and I am the only one providing financially for my aged parents. If I have the opportunity I would leave this country even if it means seeking asylum abroad...

Male Call-centre agent

The narrative above represented feelings of total distress and rejection in response to stressors. In this case, the extreme reactions to the conflict situations of this respondent which was collaborated by three other participants were unfortunate and alarming. Coping methods of avoidance/resignation has often been found to be a display of one's abdication of control for the purposes of escaping from surrounding conflicts. This style of coping is sometimes said to magnify the problem beyond proportion because of the perception that nothing can change except one finds an exit from the situation which is often exacerbated by feelings of lack of control which results in taking irrational decisions most times which can be deduced from the narrative of this participant (Rotondo *et al.* 2003).

5. Conclusions

The entire study primarily contributes to scholarly knowledge in areas of holistic factors that can be found to influence people's perception of WLB practices and various coping strategies which can serve to buffer imbalances encountered. The Nigerian experience reveals the macro-environmental factors have been major sources of work-family conflict in the country. The front office workers in the three sectors investigated did not elucidate any dissimilarity in their views of the overwhelming surrounding challenges confronting Nigeria. Culture of corruption, high unemployment ratios, poverty, inflation, patriarchy are some problems identified as exacerbating worker's WLC. To buffer con-

flict affects, this study further extends knowledge by presenting how Nigerian workers adopt the various coping strategies as relief measures. Though it is established that the behavioural and cognitive coping efforts if effectively employed, moderates distressing situations, however, the Nigerian case tends to relay a salient notion that Nigerians seem to accept WLC as a way of life going by the majority of the narratives from participants. Coping strategies adopted seems to be used to suppress conflict rather than eradicate or reduce stressors. Interestingly, the data generated from study did not reflect any adoption of the problem-solving approach which theorizes that individual takes specific and decisive action(s) to eliminate the stressors (Rotondo Carlson, Kincaid 2003). As earlier discussed, this highlights the hardiness culture that Nigerian workers have adopted to endure the adversities of WLC. This study therefore suggests the urgent need for accountable and socially responsible government which has for centuries been the real issue affecting Nigeria. The well-being of a country's manpower resource is central to effective productivity which stimulates business growth in any sector of a nation's economy. Lack of institutionalised social support systems, disregard for a culture that encourages WLB solutions and effectual enforcement of employment standards by the national government makes it possible for Nigerian employers of labour to circumvent the ideals of WLB practices and policies (Xiao, Cooke 2012) which unfortunately serves as one of the reasons for poor economic performance that has encumbered sustainable and ethical business in Nigeria for so long.

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