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The Impact of Work-Life Balance on the Commitment and Motivation of Nigerian Women Employees

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Abstract

This study borders on motivating female employees in Nigerian organisations in order to widen possibilities for business growth, high performance and organisational commitment. It is also about the impacts of work-life balance (WLB) on the commitment and motivation of women employees in Nigeria. Thus, the main thrust of this paper is to articulate how WLB affects these variables: women's commitment and motivation in bringing about better organisational performance particularly at the turn of the millennium when organisations are in a constant flux of competition and change precipitated largely by the pressures of ascendancy of women's involvement in work-related activities, the descent of patriarchy and above all postmodernist pressure. The realities of African (Nigerian) patriarchal society have brought about serious challenges for women employees both at home and in organisations causing them to be pressured, which is largely responsible for the nature of motivation and commitment they bring to work. To this end, this paper will be exploring how to enhance (Nigerian) women employees' motivation to bring about commitment for better organisational performance, given their perceived interests to get paid employment as precipitated by pressures of work-life imbalance as well as postmodernist burden to be part of providing for their families.

Keywords: WLB; Commitment; Motivation; Nigerian Women Employees; Organisational Performance.

Work-Life Balance, Nigerian Organization and Women: Background, Context and Rationale

In recent time, there has been an upsurge in the consideration of the pressures that work has on family as well as life of employees. This has triggered research bordering on wok-life (WLB). In an environment where there is high level of competitive pressures stemming largely from efforts to deliver quality service, the weight of this on employees are enormous (Karatape, 2010; Lourel et al, 2009). This is because the issue of conflict or interface between people's private lives and occupational stress is critical to understanding how organisational can leverage on their performance and productivity levels as well as motivating staff for employees' commitment (Deery, 2008; Cannon, 1998; Aluko, 2009). Until recently, the issue of WLB was conceived primarily as a Western idea; but this has radically changed as African (Nigerian) women have taken up paid employment in the contemporary era in order to be part of provision of family needs. Nevertheless, this has also come with a huge price as families,

organisations and social lives are impacted in the process. The traditional African society made the burden of women in taking care of their families huge as a consequence of male dominated (patriarchal) system as well as social construction.

In a patriarchal societies such as Nigeria, the impact of work-life (WLB) on employees particularly women is challenging. This is in view of the realities of patriarchy that puts women in a position where family commitments come into serious conflict with occupational life (Aziz & Cunningham, 2008; Mordi et al, 2010). 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 work-life imbalance that affects their motivation and commitment to work; this in final analysis impinges on the productivity and performance of Nigerian organisations as a consequence (Aluko, 2009; Mordi et al, 2010). In addition to this standpoint, recently, and given the pressures on women to contribute to sustaining family in terms of financial as well as economic support, women have taken paid employments that have brought conflict in homes as demands of the jobs they do conflict with their family life and *vice versa*. Given the urgency of work-life balance in rethinking the nature of contemporary organisations for better performance, motivation and commitment, this paper considers the womenfolk as its focal point in order to contribute to the evolving conceptual as well as scholarly meditations on addressing the dynamic of WLB on women, who are oftentimes victims of societal arrangement couched in the tenets of patriarchy.

In this direction, another reason for this development is the articulation of WLB in view of modern demographic changes that have seen increasing number of women in paid employment in Nigeria since the 1960s as well as in the workplaces, and the implications of dual career families that generates an increasing need for women to balance these two dominant spheres of life. For example, rising living cost is a case in point, and most recently, economic recession has increased the necessity of women contributing towards household responsibilities. On the part of organisations, family-friendly policies/initiatives such as flexible working hours, alternative work arrangement, maternity leave policies/benefits regarding family care responsibilities, employee assistance programmes and compensation packages have now become significant parts of most companies human resource management packages in order to retain commitment, satisfaction and motivation from working mothers (Netemeyer, Boles & McMurrian, 1996).

Concerns have always been raised regarding policy and debates on WLB from the perspective of the quality of working life when weighed against the broader family life matters. However, the main themes of these debates or discussions are the need for organisations and their employees to adopt good WLB practices and policies to tackle conflicts that ensure from the interface of family or social pressures and work stress. *A priori*, the concept of WLB is arguably subjective as the indicators that underpin its definitional contours are debated in order to actually state what constitutes the issue. However, (Guest, 2002) suggested three indicators that may have objectively brought the issue of WLB to the limelight for best practices in organisations in order to maintain a fulfilled life as well as to positively impact organisational commitment, productivity and development. First, he indicated work related factors causing problems of work-life imbalance due to the intensity of modern work such as information overload, advances in IT, quest for superior customer service delivery, intensive and extensive labour flexibility or working patterns that put increased pressure of people. Second, those

elements relating to life outside work that might cause work-life conflict such as invasiveness of work on private life (e.g. telecommuting), societal affluence, privatization of family life, growth of single parent families, absentee fathers, wealth accumulation and insatiable lure of consumerism, among others. The third factor is the awareness, attitudes and disposition of people to harmonise these imbalances across a variety of life related situations. In fig 1 below, a diagrammatic representation of the theoretical paradigm of this paper is being articulated for clarity as well as to conceptually illustrate what this paper aims to bring to the fore.
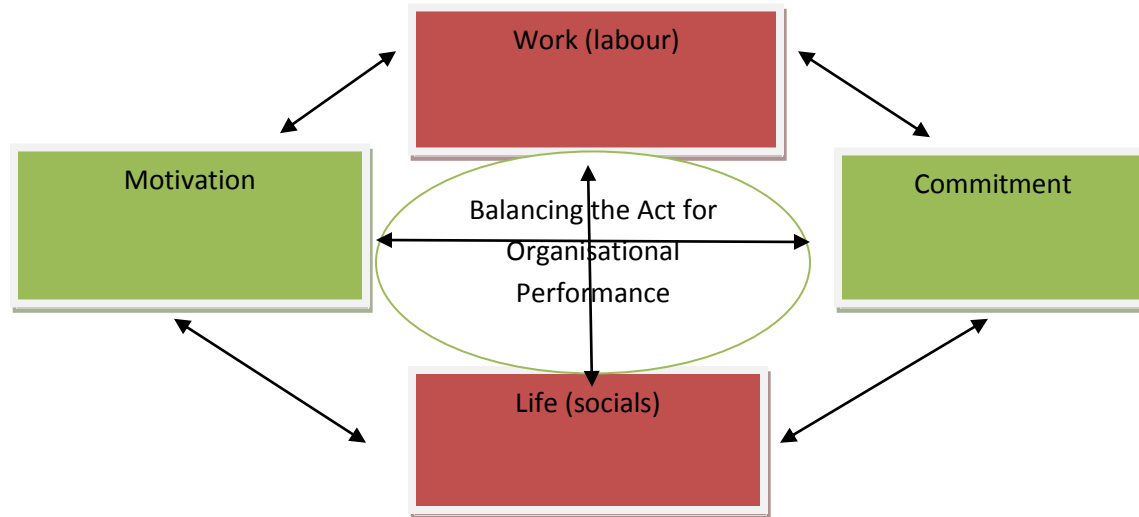
Source: Researchers' finding, 2012.

The diagram above illustrates the rectilinear relationship between work and life; it also shows that motivation and commitment have direct relationship as well. In addition, the four external components of the figure need to coalesce healthily in order to bring better organisational performance. By this, we argue that for an organisational to perform better particularly in Nigeria given the urgency of WLB, female employees need to be adequately motivated to bring motivation. Put simply, these ''four externalities'' (commitment, life or family, motivation and work) as we call it need to be inextricably linked positively to impact the interior component (organisational performance) favourably. This process is critical to resolving or limiting the burden of WLB on Nigerian female employees as well as Nigerian organisations.

Defining WLB and Commitment: Assessing Literature and Theories
As researches suggest, there is no precise, monolithic definition of WLB. Generally, the concept of work-life balance (WLB) is premised on the fact that a person's life is clearly divided into two marked areas: work and life, with the former oftentimes having negative restrictions on the latter. Thus, WLB could be theorised as the connexion 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 (Felstead, Gallie & Green, 2002). This entails balanced interface between paid employment and other areas of life. In deepening this viewpoint, (Clark, 2000: 751) stated a more precise definition of WLB as being "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict". Furthermore, Manfredi & Holliday (2004) contended as thus: "WLB is based on the notion that paid work and personal life should

be seen less as competing priorities than as complementary elements of a full life". In the thinking of Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw (2003) WLB refers to ''the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in – and equally satisfied with – his or her work role and family role'' (p. 513). Broadly, WLB underscores the interface of work and family and the consequences of these two variables on commitment to work, job satisfaction, family roles and social related themes that find resonance in the nature of this interface. In what follows, WLB would be linked to organisational commitment, which is one of the main facets of this paper.

Organisational commitment is one of the most important factors that affect organisational growth and productivity as well as a defining factor in shaping human resource management (Padala, 2011; Ahuja, 2006). Beyond, this, organisational commitment is being studied because it has a lot of affinity with organisational performance and motivation. Several studies have demonstrated that organisational commitment predicts as well as shapes important factors that include job satisfaction, organisational citizenship, absenteeism, performance, turnover and WLB among other variables (Lambert et al, 2006; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). By definition, organisational commitment is a person's attitude to work, which reveals s/he identification with and involvement in a particular organization. Accordingly,

> organisational commitment deals with ''an identification with
> the goals and values of the organisation, a desire to belong to the
> organisation and a willingness to display effort on behalf of the
> organisation'' (Mowdray, 1992 as cited in Armstrong, 1998, p. 319).

Organisational commitment can be grouped into three connected parts.   These parts are as thus:

- Passionate and strong desire to maintain membership
- Strong belief in the organisation's vision, goals and values
- Willingness to exert extra effort on behalf of organisations.

Our intention in this paper is to link organisational commitment to WLB and by so doing tease out how WLB affects individual's commitment to work as well as the consequent impact this has on organisational performance, productivity and employees' motivation. This is because if the nature of WLB is adversely affected, this will in turn impact commitment to work.

As this paper hypothesises, associated with more women in the workforce and allied industries is an upsurge in work-life imbalance as people endeavour to juggle or conduct multiple roles, all involving great amount of energy, time, stress and commitment. To this end, the question of gender difference has come to the fore as regards how the dynamic of WLB affects both sexes. As stated earlier, in traditional African setting, this seems to have more impact on the women given their roles in families that have been doubled by the pressures to be part of providing for their families economically and financially. This situation has telling impact on the commitment and motivation that women bring to work (Lambert et al, 2006; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 2000; Aziz & Cunningham, 2008). The impacts of WLB on both male and female employees have brought into saliency phrases such as ''good providers'', which deals with men as sole providers of monetary income in traditional African environment. This has also brought to the front burner the concept of ''new fatherhood'' that underscores provision of family monetary income by both parents. For the female, work-life imbalance causes them to put more time and energy

to work in order to provide for their children and families, particularly single parents or divorcees. In doing this, the length of time as well as level of commitment that women employees bring to work is being affected adversely as stress from taking care of their children or wards, including social pressures impinge on their level of commitment and *vice versa* (Harpaz & Snir, 2003).

Deductively, work-life imbalance is experienced more by female employees in Nigeria, which is obviously a facet of the traditional African setting. Thus, ''researchers have generally found that women experience greater amounts of work-life imbalance (not to be confused with work-family conflict) than men'' (Aziz & Cunningham, 2008). Karatepe (2010, p. 837) considers the impact of WLB on organisational commitment and individuals' social life to be family-work imbalance; while work-family imbalance or conflict deals with inter-role conflict or stress connected to performing family related responsibilities. In what follows, attempts will be made to determine how Nigerian female employees could be motivated to be more economically viable in order to provide for their families as well as be able to put in their best in their workplaces. This is crucial in sustaining organisational growth and enhancing individual commitment to work.

Motivating Women for WLB and High Productivity

Concerning motivation, Deci (1972) talks about intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation models. Deci (1972) sees the former to be satisfaction derived from doing a piece of work itself, while the latter is considered as other factors such money and other incentives that drive individuals to perform better. According to Pinder (1998) motivation entails

> ''Set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as
> beyond an individual's being, to initiate work-related
> behaviour, and to determine its form, direction, intensity,
> and duration'' (p. 99).

Within this frame, for Nigerian female employees to be more committed to work, the issue of how to motivate them to bring this to fruition is critical in managing as well as leading Nigerian organisations in the 21st century. This is also one of the serious factors to be considered for better human resource management that will bring organisational expansion as well as less conflict in terms of work-life interface.

The idea of motivation in managing people as well as making them committed to work principally has to do with how people (employees or workers) are offered incentives and inspired to perform better in order to actualise the goals of such organisation. This method of motivating people takes diverse perspectives, which a lot of management practitioners have identified over the years. In his *A Force for Change*, John P. Kotter (1990) contends that

> ''to motivate, he or she will try to increase people's efforts to
> accomplish precisely what is on his or her agenda by offering
> incentives, carrots and sticks, in a highly controlling manner.

He will smile or praise every time people do something called
for in his plan'' (p. 64).

In the above declaration by Kotter, the emphasis here is what he characterised as ''energy surge'' that is largely dependent on what Herzberg (1959) calls ''satisfiers'', a method that arouses interests and commitment of employees particularly within the remit of our intention in this paper, the women, to commit to the growth of organisations as well as impact positively to how families are run successfully. In the same manner, motivation is ''the immediate influence on direction, vigour, and persistence of action'' Atkinson (1964, p. 2) of people in relation to organisational commitment or work.

A consideration of some motivation theories is appropriate here; we shall be considering Abraham Maslow's (1943) theory of hierarchy of needs as well as Herzberg's theory of motivation. This is first of all based on the fact that both theories have something in common (Stewart and Stewart, 2002). They are also appropriate in order to motivate employees to put in their best to work efficiently. In 1954, Abraham Maslow published his path-breaking treatise, *Motivation and Personality*. This study brought to the front burner Maslow's schema about how individuals satisfy various needs regarding their work. Prior to Maslow's publication of the above mentioned book, he had initially proposed his theory of hierarchy of needs in an article in 1943. The paper was titled ''A Theory of Human Motivation'', which Maslow used to extend the confines of his observations of human beings' behaviour, curiosity and interests. As a behavioural psychologist, Maslow contended ''that there is a general pattern of needs recognition and satisfaction that people follow in generally the same sequence'' (Gawel, 2009: 2). Based on his theory of needs, Maslow also theorised that people's needs are in layers that have to be followed one after the order in the hierarchy rungs.

Put simply, Maslow's concept of hierarchy of need borders on the fact that man's need are in a sequence. This hierarchy or sequence is pyramidal in scope. At the base of the pyramid are basic physiological needs, which include food, sex, sleep, water, etc. Next in the hierarchy is safety needs – these needs include human's need to be secured from immediate threat as well as the need to have a roof over one's head, among others (Stewart and Stewart 2002: 46). The third part of this sequence is social needs that deal with companionship and friendship among others. The fourth in the hierarchy is about status needs. These needs have to do with feeling well and being thought well of by people. And finally, the top on the ladder is self-actualisation needs which have to do with self-fulfilment or realisation. Within this mould, Stewart and Stewart (2002, p. 48) stated that ''the work of Herzberg is often cited at the same time as Maslow's''. Herzberg's theory of motivation rests on what he calls ''two-factor'' theory of motivation. One of the facets of the ''two-factor'' model, is what Herzberg called the ''hygiene factors'', which entail dissatisfaction resulting from not satisfying the needs of an individual or employee. These needs could be basic pay, good working environment, incentives to be more committed to work such as provision of childcare support among others. On the other hand, the presence of other less tangible factors such as recognition for doing a piece of work well as well as promotion, etc, could create or facilitate motivation. Herzberg calls these ''motivators''

or satisfiers. Nevertheless, motivation no matter how it comes is a *sine qua non* for the commitment of Nigerian women employees.

Strategies for Increased Organisational Performance through Motivation and Commitment

When organisations are not performing possibly as a result of lack of organisational commitment stemming essentially from pressure or stress form balancing the social with employment related issues, there is need to reframe motivation for increased commitment as well as enhanced productivity levels. Certain measures need to be adopted to foster this development. These measures include the following.

- Job safety in contingency period
- Rewarding merit, excellence and commitment
- Job improvement/promotion
- Flexible working time (period)
- Training and development
- Shared, distributed leadership
- Horizontal communication
- Collective involvement and bargaining
- Linking motivation to leadership
- Pay rise
- Childcare support
- Occupational therapy.

For a better managed workforce in Nigerian organisations – particularly managing women employees – the above mentioned points need to be factored in. In doing this, friction or conflict that comes in the wake of work-life imbalance in the spheres of social life or families and organisations will be ameliorated.

In buttressing the above, there are important variables necessary to galvanise employees' motivation to bring commitment to the fore (Rouda & Kusy, 1995; Lawson, 1998). This process has affinity with the concept of WLB. According to Rouda & Kusy (1995), there are four major ways of conducting employees' needs assessment so as to ascertain what is integral for organisational performance. They proposed the following:

- Identifying priorities and layers of importance

- Performing a ''gap'' analysis

- Identifying causes of performance issues and/or opportunities therein

- Identifying possible growth opportunities as well as solutions to problems

Lumped together, the above point enumerated are important in identifying Nigerian women employees' needs in the realm of work-life so as to balance the issues for better organisational

commitment; hence, their impacts could adversely affect women's motivation, and organisations may carry the burden in the final analysis.

Conclusion

The issues of commitment and motivation are central to work-life balance for organisational performance as well as commitment to work. In Nigerian organisations, where women (employees) face diverse forms of pressures consequent upon patriarchal practice that percolates organisational paradigms and pressures from postmodernist urgency, there is a sense of urgency to rethink motivating women for more commitment that they might bring to work. This is in view of occupational stressors as well as strain from balancing the social with work-related matters. From the foregoing, it could be deduced that motivation and commitment are basic elements needed for organisations to perform better as well as for Nigerian female employees to be incentivised for better organisational commitment and productivity particularly in the recent troubled business times.

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