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Family-Work Conflict, Information Use, and Social Competence: A Case Study of Married Postgraduate Students in the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

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Introduction

Managing the conflict between family and work obligations is an important issue. The demands of family and work pose critical challenges to individuals, researchers, and organisations. Because of the openness of the economy, political changes, and changes in societal values, the balance of job and family obligations has shifted dramatically. In the western part of Nigeria, men have traditionally played the role of breadwinner in the family. With the shifts in family and work domains, individuals must face and adapt to the inter-role conflict (Frone and Rice, 1987). Family-work conflict a source of pressure, and can cause problems with health, work performance, and so on.

The growing number of dual career couples and working mothers with young children have made it more likely that both men and women have both family and work obligations. These changes have led to considerable scholarship on work and families, including research on work-family conflict (Greenhaus and Beutel, 1985).

Family-work conflict has been associated with a number of dysfunctional outcomes (Bacharach, Bamberger, and Conley, 1990), decreased family and occupational well-being (Kinnunen and Mauno, 1998), and job and life dissatisfaction (Netermeyer, Boles, and McMurrian, 1996). Netermeyer, et al., (1996) observe that work and family are two important domains that are not compatible and that there are usually conflicts between the two domains. The domain flexibility hypothesis predicts that the work domain is a greater source of conflict than the family domain for both men and women. The domain salience hypothesis predicts that the family domain is a greater source of conflict for women and the work domain a greater source of conflict for men (Izraeli 1988).

Studies reveal that those most satisfied with their work tend to be less satisfied with family responsibilities and vice versa. Research shows participation in one role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the other (Greenhaus and Beutel, 1985).

Information use by students is also an important topic. The amount of information needed and received depends on the complexity of the choice or question for which the information is needed. Information is indispensable in human development, and is the basis for the progress of human civilization and society (Aboyade in Ikonne (1995). To Nzotta (1985), human beings and human societies depend so much on information for existence that it can be said "No information, No life, No society." Aiyepoku (1982), in his report on the use of information by policymakers in Nigeria, states that, "the level of information consciousness" is a deterrent to the use of information by these policymakers. He also reports that the level of information familiarity could be an obstacle to the use of any kind of information.

Family and work are two important focal points in an adult's life. The role expectations of these domains lead to conflicts that have a connection to the use of information. The ability to establish, maintain, and develop constructive social relationships with other people in the work environment (Frone, et al., 1992) is related to psychological distress and mental dissatisfaction (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985).

Researchers have assessed family-work conflict with other variables. According to Frone, et al., (1992), operationalization of work-family conflict varies from study to study, and limits the ability to generalize. To Aryee, et al. (1999), the increased participation of married women in the labour force in the US and other industrialized countries has led to a growing realization that the work and family domains are highly interdependent. He observes that adults in dual earner and single parent households must constantly strive to balance work and family requirements. Research has also shown that those with a good level of social competence and ability to use information are more likely to withstand the stresses and strains of life, compared with less educationally-privileged people (Netermeyer, Boles, and McMurrian, 1996).

In the academic environment, students who have a good background in information background develop a good level of social competence and have the potential to promote social responsibilities in a variety of ways (Topping and Bremner 1998). Provision and use of information can provide perspective on why some students learn more effectively than others, particularly when working in groups, or dealing appropriately with social rules, authority relationships, and generally operating effectively within a social environment with fellow students.

Voydanoff (1988) posits that meeting the often incompatible demands of family and work may create family-work conflict. For example, working long hours may prevent adequate performance of family responsibilities. Family demands may also interfere with work, e.g., a child's illness may prevent attendance at work or school. Understanding the points of view and interpreting the emotional state and behaviour of others depend on the ability to deal with the emotions aroused by social interaction, and are developed from information use (Welsh and Bierman, 2002).

Long work hours and the relative absence of organizational family life combine to create conflict between family responsibilities and work school with particular reference to the married male and female postgraduate students in the Faculty of Education, University Ibadan. The researcher has observed signs of worry and stress among students, especially the working parents. Some are not regular in attendance, some even come to the lecture-room with babies. Assignments were not done and submitted at the right time. All these were the result of the multiple role pressure on working students, which affects both their academic and social competence. The use of information is vital in dealing with the pressure of multiple roles.

Students' social competence depends on factors that include social skill, social awareness, and self-confidence. Social skill is a term used to describe the ability to use a variety of social behaviours appropriate to a given interpersonal situation and that are pleasing to others in each situation. The capacity to inhibit negative social behaviour is also a reflection of social skill. The student with a repertoire of social skills, social awareness, and perception is likely to be socially and academically competent.

The married postgraduate students in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ibadan have dual roles and responsibilities. They have jobs, families, and school, which results in conflict, which affects not only academic performance, but also social interaction and competence.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to investigate family-work conflict, information use, and social competence of the married postgraduate students in the Faculty of Education.

Statement of the Problem

The married postgraduate students in Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan must combine academics, work, and family responsibilities. They experience pressure from conflicting roles. Participation in academic work is more difficult because family and work responsibilities conflict, which tends to affect academic performance and social interactions. In the academic environment, diverse information sources are available and can be used to alleviate academic and social incompetence.

Hypotheses

- There is no significant correlation between information use and social competence of the married postgraduate students in Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan.
- There is no significant correlation between information use and family-work conflict of the married postgraduate students in Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan.
- There is no significant multiple correlation between information use, family-work conflict, and social competence of the married postgraduate student in the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan.

Methodology

The research used a descriptive survey method. A questionnaire elicited desired information from the respondents. The study population consists of the 1,148 married postgraduate students in all departments of the Faculty of Education in 2002-2003. A random sample of 799 was selected. The instrument was divided into two sections. The first collected biographical information, i.e., sex, age, department, educational qualification, and level of education. The second section had three parts: ten questions on family-work conflict, eight questions on information use, and ten questions on social competence. Respondents used a Likert Scale that included Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.83 using Cronbach Alpha method.

Of the 799 administered, 500 questionnaires, a 63 percent response rate, were completed. Data was analysed with simple correlation, multiple regression analyses, and statistical test.

Table 1. Sample Allocation by Department

Department	Population	Sample	No. of Respondents
SPE	86	74	62
TEE	315	189	93
G&C	150	90	49
LARIS	132	89	87
KHE	160	96	63
ADE	95	87	61
EDU MGT	210	126	85
TOTAL	1148	799	500

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents.

Sex	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Male	253	50.6
Female	247	49.4
Age		
23-30	116	23.2
31-35	111	22.2
36-40	158	31.6
41-45	76	15.2
46+	39	7.8
Educational Qualification		
B.Sc.	362	72.7
M.Sc.	138	27.6
Current Programme/Course Level.		
Masters 700L	434	86.8
Ph.D. 800L	66	13.2

Men and women each account for about half the respondents. Nearly one third of respondents were age 36-40, while only about 8 percent were older than 46. Nearly three quarters hold B.Sc. certificates, with the rest having M.Sc. Nearly all the respondents were Master's degree students.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant correlation between information use and social competence of the married postgraduate student in the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan.

Table 1: Test of significance of correlation between information use and social competence of the respondents.

Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD	R	R
Information use	500	11.22	2.90	0.2591	0.05
Social competence	500	46.64	6.62		

Table 1 reveals a significant correlation between information use and social competence of the respondents with $\{r = 0.2591\}$; $P < 0.05$. The mean score of the information use of the respondents is $\{x = 11.22, SD = 2.90\}$ and that of social competence is $\{x = 46.64, SD = 6.62\}$

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant correlation between information use and family work conflict of the married postgraduate students in the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan.

Table 2: Test of significance of correlation between information use and family work conflict of respondents.

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	r	P	Decision
Information use	500	11.22	2.90	0.057	0.05	N.S.
Family work conflict	500	17.21	2.91			

Table 2 above reveals that no significant correlation exists between information use and family work conflict of the respondents with ($r = 0.057$; $P = 0.05$)

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant multiple correlation between information use, family work conflict, and social competence of the married postgraduate students in the Faculty Education, University of Ibadan.

Table 3: Test of significant multiple correlations between information use, family-work conflict, and social competence of the respondents

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	r	P	Decision
Information use	500	11.22	2.90	0.2644	0.05	S*
Family work conflict	500	13.63	5.64			
Social competence	500	46.64	6.62			

Table 3 Above shows that a significant multiple correlation exists between information use, family-work conflict, and social competence of the respondents ($r = 0.2644$; $P < 0.05$)

Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis 1

The result reveals a significant correlation between information use and social competence, which corresponds to the assertion of Welsh and Bierman (2002). Therefore, before one can use information, one must have some social skill and social competence.

Hypothesis 2

No significant correlation exists between information use and family-work conflict. There is no literature to support or rebut the finding of this hypothesis, but one can view the variable from the philosophical point of view that they are in no way related and as such one cannot influence each other.

Hypothesis 3

Analysis reveals a significant correlation between information use, family-work conflict, and social competence. This corresponds to part of Welsh and Bierman's (2002) finding that information use is correlated with social competence. The result of the first hypothesis of the present study also confirms this. There is no literature in support of the correspondence of information use with family-work conflict. Positive use of information may lessen conflict, but the negative perception and use of information might have the opposite result.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Married postgraduate students in the Faculty of Education can alleviate the pressure of conflicting roles through the use of information, and should seek all available means to do this. Information that is gathered should be properly employed to solve family-work conflict. Information providers must disseminate information to people that need it at the right time. Conscientious efforts should be made to provide information that will deal with family-work conflict. The university library has an important role to play in providing effective information services to postgraduate students to improve their social competence.

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