



WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF WOMEN IN MALE DOMINATED FIELDS

Tunji-Olayeni, P.F., Ogunde, A.O., Joshua, O and Oni, A.A

Covenant Univeristy, Ogun State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Women are now moving into fields previously reserved for men. Male dominated fields like engineering and construction require brute strength, have high accident rates and poor work life balance. Many women take up paid employment to support their families financially. The challenging demands both at work and at home could have negative implications on the well-being of women and their job performance. Hence, this study aimed to assess work life balance of female construction professionals. The study adopted a quantitative research paradigm with the use of 50 questionnaires distributed purposively to female construction professionals in Lagos, Nigeria. Data from the study were analyzed by means of descriptive statistics such as frequency and mean. Findings reveal that many of the respondents experience work-life conflict as a result of the demanding roles both at work and at home. However, most of the respondents have a positive disposition towards their work life conflict because of the scarcity of alternative job. The study recommends that management of construction organizations should be supportive of women so that work-life conflict can be minimized and organizational performance improved.

Keywords: construction industry, female professionals, work-life balance, Nigeria

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1. INTRODUCTION

Engineering and construction have always been dominated by men. However, women are now moving into fields once considered strictly for men (Gurjao, 2006). Male dominated fields like engineering and construction are viewed as fields that require brute strength (Agapiou, 2002), that have high incidence of occupational hazards (ILO, 2011) and poor work-life balance (Wentling, 1996). Work-life balance in particular is a major issue for women in male dominated fields because of the tasking roles women play both at work and at home. Many women support their spouse financially by taking up paid employment and yet, they ensure that their children and family members are not neglected at the same time. This situation could have negative impacts on the well-being of women, their work performance and family relationships. This study assesses the work-life balance of women in the

construction industry with a view of improving work-life experiences of women in the construction industry.

2. WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Work-life balance is the satisfaction and good functioning both at work and at home with minimum of role conflict (Greenhaus, 2002). It is also defined as the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in and equally satisfied with his or her work role and family role (Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw, 2003). It can be seen as an individual's ability to meet their work and family commitments, as well as other non-work responsibilities and activities (Delecta, 2011).

Greenhaus et al., (2003) explained that work-life balance has three components namely:

1. **Time balance** which refers to the allocation of equal time to both job and family
2. **Involvement balance** meaning equal level of psychological involvement in both job and family
3. **Satisfaction balance** which means equal levels of satisfaction derived from both job and family

Factors affecting work-life balance in the construction industry

1. **Work load and long hours of work** – The construction industry is characterized by long work hours (Dong, 2005). It is common to find operatives in the construction industry working for more than the stipulated 8 hours working period. Many workers also work 6 days in a week. This is as a result of tight work schedule in most construction projects and the need to prevent severe financial penalties should deadlines not be met (Francis and Lingard, 2004).
2. **High incidence of occupation hazards** – The construction industry is one of the most hazardous industries with over 60,000 fatalities occurring on construction sites around the world on a yearly basis (ILO, 2011). The need for extra care exerts additional pressure on work-load which ultimately affects work-life balance
3. **Adversarial nature of the construction industry** – The construction industry is a highly litigious industry with multiple stakeholders demanding satisfaction (Francis and Lingard, 2004). Scenes of operatives arguing with supervisors over wages are common on construction sites (Tunji-Olayeni et al., 2017). This situation puts more pressure on construction industry operatives to deliver which affects their work life balance.

2.1. Work-life Conflict:

Is a source of stress resulting from irreconcilable pressure from work and family (Carlson, Kacmair and Williams, 2000). It is a form of inter-role conflict in which role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1987). Work-life conflict is a major source of stress for many workers (Frone, Russel and Barnes, 1996). Work stress can be detrimental to individuals and their job performance (Eziyi et al., 2011). Work-life conflict can lead to poor health. Allen et al., (2000) noted that work life conflict is associated with fatigue, higher levels of stress, poor mental and physical health, increased anxiety and depression levels, drinking problems and less life satisfaction.

Work-life conflict is also detrimental to organizational performance. Work life conflict can result in lack of commitment to organizational goals and poor job satisfaction both of which can lead to poor organizational performance.

Work-life conflict is also a leading cause of workers' turnover (Batt and Valcour, 2003) a situation that is detrimental for organizational performance.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The study adopted a quantitative research paradigm with the use of questionnaires distributed purposively to 50 female construction professionals in Lagos, Nigeria. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data obtained from the questionnaire. Most of the items in the questionnaire were adapted from Francis and Lingard, (2004) and reworded.

3.1. Characteristics of respondents

Table 1 Characteristics of respondents

Characteristics	Frequency
Designation	
Architect	16
Builder	8
Quantity Surveyor	12
Engineer	14
Total	50
Years of experience	
<10 years	19
10-20 years	31
Total	50
Household description	
Married with children < 18 years	28
Married with children > 18 years	3
Married without children	5
Single parent	1
Singles	13
Total	50
Work Location	
Head office	33
On site mainly in site office	17
Total	50

Table 1 indicates the characteristics of the respondents surveyed. The respondents consisted of 16 Architects, 8 Builders, 12 Quantity Surveyors and 14 Engineers. Out of all the respondents surveyed 19 had work experience less than 10 years while 31 respondents had work experience between 10 and 20 years. Twenty-eight respondents were married with children less than 18 years, 3 of the respondents were married with children greater than 18 years, 5 of the respondents were married but without children, 1 of the respondents was a single mother while 13 of the respondents were singles. Thirty-three of the respondents worked at the head office while only 17 worked on site in the site office.

3.2. Work Experiences of Female Professionals in the construction industry

3.2.1. Hours worked per day

Table 2 Hours worked per day

Hours per day	Frequency
<8 hours per day	14
>8 hours per day	36
Total	50

From table 2, Thirty-six of the respondents worked more than the stipulated 8 hours working period while only 14 of the respondents worked less than 8 hours. This corroborates the findings of (Dong, 2005) that the construction industry is characterized by long work hours

3.2.2. Work on Weekends

Table 3 Work on Weekends

Work on weekend	Percentage
Yes	40
No	60
Total	100

Table 3 shows the percentage of respondents that work on weekends. 40% of the respondents surveyed work on weekends while 60% of the respondents do not work on weekends. Even though majority of the respondents do not work on weekends, the percentage of those working on weekends is still relatively high.

3.2.3. Work on Holidays

Table 4 Work on Holidays

Work on holidays	Percentage
Yes	22
No	78
Total	100

From table 4, it can be seen that 78% of the respondents surveyed do not work on holidays while only 22% of them work on holidays.

3.3. Workload

Table 5 Workload

Workload	Mean
Quantity of work you are expected to do	4.68
Workload of the amount of things to be done	4.06
Number of conflicting demands	3.96
Number of projects you have	3.94
Number of phone calls and site visits during the day	3.80
Amount of time you have to undertake work	3.28

Extent to which you feel you never have time	3.26
Amount of time you spend in meetings	2.66
Time to think and contemplate	2.56

Table 5 shows the nature of workload the respondents have to handle. The most common workload for the respondents was quantity of work expected of them with a mean score of 4.68. This is followed by the workload of the amount of things to be done with mean score of 4.06 and then the number of conflicting demand with mean score of 3.96. It can be seen that the respondents have a high volume of workload and this may have detrimental effects on their health and their job performance. Eziyi et al., (2011) also found that the major cause of stress among construction workers is high volume of workload.

3.4. Work Responsibility

Table 6 Work responsibility

Responsibility	Mean
The responsibility you have for carrying out assignment and projects	4.62
The responsibility you have for budgets and expenditures	2.70
The responsibility you have for the safety of others	2.04
The responsibility you have for initiating assignments and projects	1.98
The responsibility you have for equipments and facilities	1.92
The responsibility you have for the future careers of others	1.34

From table 6, the most common work responsibility of the respondents was carrying out assigned tasks and projects with a mean score of 4.62. This is followed by budgets and expenditures with a mean score of 2.70 and then work of others with a mean score of 2.48. This shows that the respondents have a main responsibility to perform the task assigned to them. It also indicates that the respondents who are women are mainly assigned clerical works like financial matters. Tunji-Olayeni et al., (2017) also note that women in the construction industry are relegated to the background to handle mostly clerical roles.

3.5. Family Responsibility

Table 7 Family Responsibility

Responsibility	Mean
I take care of household chores	4.50
I go shopping for my family	4.40
I stay at home with a sick child	4.18
I take my children for health care appointments	3.76
I make alternate child care arrangements when necessary	3.22
I take my children to and from school	3.20
I have meals with my family	3.14
I spend fun time with my family	3.14
I spend time with my children	3.14
I have relaxed, pleasant times with my children	3.14
I adjust my work hours to the needs of other family	2.44

members	
I make arrangements for children during summer vacation	2.38
I attend my children’s school events	2.04
I participate in community activities	1.86
I visit neighbors’ and friends	1.72

Table 7 shows the family responsibilities and demands on the respondents surveyed. Most of the respondents (women) are responsible for house chores with a mean of 4.50. This is followed by going for shopping with a mean of 4.40 and then staying at home with a sick child with a mean of 4.18. This reveals how demanding family responsibilities are on the women surveyed. Many of them have to juggle high volume of workload and demanding female responsibilities day in and day out.

3.6. Individual effects of work-life conflict

Table 8 Individual effects of work-life conflict

Effects	Mean
At my work I feel confident that I am effective at getting things done	4.58
In my opinion I am good at my job	4.56
I have accomplished worthwhile things in this job	4.02
I can effectively solve the problems that arise in my work	3.96
I feel I am making an effective contribution to my organization	3.86
I feel exhilarated when I accomplish worthwhile things on my job	3.78
Working all day is really strenuous for me	3.64
I feel tired from my work	3.58
I feel tired when I get up in the morning	3.58
I have become less interested in my job	3.54
I have become less enthusiastic about my job	3.24
I feel used up at the end of each work day	3.22
I feel emotionally drained from my work	3.20
I doubt the significance of my work	2.62
I just want to do my job and not be bothered	2.24
I have become less interested in my work	2.14
I have become cynical about whether my work contributes anything	1.46

Table 8 shows the effect of work-life conflict on the respondents. Although the respondents experience some form of conflict between their work and life, work life conflict seem not to affect them negatively. Many of the respondents have a positive attitude towards the conflicts they face at work and in their lives. The greatest effect of work –life conflict on the respondents is that respondents feel confident that they are effective at getting things done

with a mean score of 4.58. This is followed by an opinion that they are good at their job with a mean score of 4.56 and I believe I have been able to accomplish something worthwhile

3.7. Effect of work-life conflict on families

Table 9 Effect of work-life conflict on families

Effect	Mean
The demands of my work interfere with my home and family	3.60
As a result of my job, I can't involve myself as I would like with my family	2.62
I often miss important family activities because of my job	2.56
Things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands my Job puts on me	2.54
There is a conflict between my job and family commitments	2.00

The greatest effect of work-life conflict on families is that the demands of work interfere with home and family with a mean score of 3.60. This is followed by I can't involve myself as I would like with my family because of my job with a mean of 2.62 and I often miss important family activities because of my job with a mean of 2.56

3.8. Perceptions of work-life conflict effects on the organization

Table 10 Perceptions of work-life conflict effects on the organization

Effects	Mean
I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization	3.78
I do not want to leave my work because of scarcity of available alternatives	3.72
Remaining in my job is a matter of necessity not desire	3.50
Too much of my life will be disrupted if I decide to leave now	3.46
I would have left if not that I have put in so much in my job	3.44
I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization	3.38
I do not feel any obligation to remain in my present job	3.30
I owe a great deal to my organization	3.00
This organization means a lot to mean	2.84
This organization demands my loyalty	2.80
It is hard on me leaving my job	2.64
I feel emotionally attached to this organization	2.44
I would be happy to spend the rest part of my career with this organization	2.36
I would feel guilty if I left my present organization	2.32
I do not feel it is right to leave even if it is to my advantage	1.38

Table 10 indicates respondents' perception of work-life conflict effects on the organization. Most of the respondents believe that they have too few options to consider leaving their present employment. This has a mean of 3.78. The next is I do not want to leave my present work because of scarcity of available alternatives with a mean of 3.72 and the third is remaining in my present job is a matter of necessity not desire with a mean of 3.46. This finding explains why the respondents have a more positive outlook about the effects of work-life conflict on them. The positive disposition is to help them cope with the conflicts they face at home and at work because there are very few alternatives outside. Job is difficult to come by. Hence, they will rather cope with the conflicts they face at work than be out of work and face the difficult challenge of supporting their families financially.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Work-life balance of female construction professionals in Lagos, Nigeria was assessed. Work-life experiences and work-life conflict of female construction professionals was also examined. Female construction professionals face conflicts both at work and at home. However, majority of the respondents have a positive disposition towards work-life conflict because of scarcity of job alternatives. The study recommends that construction organizations should provide support for female professionals because of the challenging roles they play both at work and at home. Thereby reducing work-life conflict and improving organizational performance.

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