

28

Ibadan Journal *of the* Social Sciences

Contents

Career Choices of Nigerian Youths Entering Public-Funded University
Nyitor A. Shenge

Managing Fault Lines in Nigeria's Protracted Conflicts: The Inevitability
of Multi-Track Diplomacy in the Jos Crises
Animasawun Gbemisola

Public Service Reform and Nigeria's Global Competitiveness
E. Remi Aiyede

Reform in the Power Sector and Implications for Industrial Development
in Nigeria: The Case of Difference between Six and Half a Dozen?
Emeka E. Okafor

Internal Security Operations and Human Rights Abuses in Nigeria: Issues
and Challenges
Idowu Johnson

Influence of Gender and Locus of Control on Post-Conflict Mental Health
Measurements of Students in Jos Plateau State
Daramola, A. S. and Ndu A. O.

Work-Family Conflict and Job Demand Control in Psychological
Adjustment of Lawyers in Private Practice
John O. Ekore

VOLUME 12 / NUMBER 1 / MARCH 2014

FACULTY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN
ISSN 1597 5207

Ibadan Journal *of the* Social Sciences

Volume 12/ Number 1 March 2014

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The Business Manager
Ibadan Journal of the Social Sciences (IJSS) Department of Economics
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria
Email: journal.ijss@mail.ui.edu.ng

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ISSN:1597-5207

Printed by Samlad Printers, Mokola, Ibadan 08028252503

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Contents

Career Choices of Nigerian Youths Entering Public-Funded University <i>Nyitor A. Shenge</i>	1
Managing Fault Lines in Nigeria's Protracted Conflicts: The Inevitability of Multi-Track Diplomacy in the Jos Crises <i>Animasawun Gbemisola</i>	11
Public Service Reform and Nigeria's Global Competitiveness <i>E. Remi Aiyede</i>	28
Reform in the Power Sector and Implications for Industrial Development in Nigeria: The Case of Difference between Six and Half a Dozen? <i>Emeka E. Okafor</i>	47
Internal Security Operations and Human Rights Abuses in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges <i>Idowu Johnson</i>	65
Influence of Gender and Locus of Control on Post-Conflict Mental Health Measurements of Students in Jos Plateau State <i>Daramola, A. S. and Ndu A. O.</i>	77
Work-Family Conflict and Job Demand Control in Psychological Adjustment of Lawyers in Private Practice <i>John O. Ekore</i>	85



Work-Family Conflict and Job- Demand Control in Psychological Adjustment of Lawyers in Private Practice

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Despite the continuous interest in psychological adjustment of entrepreneurs as important factor in wellbeing and business outcomes, lawyers in private practice especially in Nigeria have not been covered and largely documented in the body of literature that exist. Hence this study that examined the roles played by work-family conflict and job demand control on psychological adjustment among lawyers as entrepreneurs in private practice. It involved a sample of 156 male and female lawyers in Ibadan metropolis. Three hypotheses were tested by using pearson 'r' and multiple regression statistics. It was found that work-family conflict was negatively related to psychological adjustment ($r = -0.412, P < .01$) while job demand control positively correlated with psychological adjustment ($r = -0.185, P < .01$). Also, work-family conflict and job demand control jointly predicted psychological adjustment ($F(2,153) = 20.55, P < .05$). Independently, predictions were found for work-family conflict ($B = -0.640, t = 5.86, P < .05$) and job demand- control ($B = -0.077, t = -2.85, P < .05$). It was concluded that work-family conflict and job demand-control are important factors in the psychological adjustment of lawyers in private practice. It implies that the variables are deserving of attention in personal development for lawyers as entrepreneurs. More so, attempt at improving their adjustment capacity need to focus on preparing them with coping skills to balance work-family demands and exercise control over their job related activities.

Keyword: Psychological adjustment, Lawyers in private practice, Job-demand control, Working-family conflict

Introduction

Psychological adjustment has consistently been found to be a major issue in the life of entrepreneurs. It represents the mental response(s) of an individual to life experiences and the strategies employed intentionally. Psychological adjustment represents a significant aspect of individual's mental health. As a balancing act, it may be affected by unfavourable factors such as genes, a wounding trauma, private pressures and stress of working. The pressure to survive and remain successful in private practice is a key driver to lawyers as entrepreneurs. Some of their life experiences as entrepreneurs may generate

stressors to shape their reaction that is defined in the level of psychological adjustment. According to Googins (1991), working and living constitute two primary pillars of existence, and every civilization and society grapples with the delicate relationships that support them. Since both life domains (work and family) demand resources such as time and/or energy and these resources are scarce, participating in both domains has the capacity to generate inter-role conflict. Greenhaus and Beuntell (1985) proposed the concept of work-family conflict which they differentiated into time-based, strain-based and

behavioural-based forms, and work-family conflict or family-work conflict as directions (Kelloway, Gottlieb & Barham, 1999; Gutek & Searle, 1991). Also, Ijide (2013); Rantenen *et al.*, (2011) reported challenges among workers while trying to strike a balance between workload and family load. Psychological adjustment is therefore an important component of people's overall wellbeing.

The concept of work-life conflict is about the level of imbalance that exists between work-life and family-life. Conflict between work and family responsibilities has long been known to create psychological distress and role overload for individuals though it was not conceptualized as work-family conflict as it is currently known (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek & Rotthenthal, 1964). Managing work and family domains remain imperative for individuals. Previous studies had indicated that work-family conflict interferes with family far more than it does with work (e.g. Roth & David, 2009). Some other findings that examined work-family conflict from gender perspective reported that work-family balance is important to both male and females, but it comes harder on women.

Since work-family conflict is an inter-role conflict where the participation in one role interferes with the participation in the other, it become necessary to consider those in entrepreneurial activity such as lawyers in private practice. They are able to determine the amount of attention to give work and family demands because of freedom from work rules of the public service and employers. They are able to define the balance between career or ambition and lifestyle (health, pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development). The question from this is; can there really be a true equitable balance between work and family? However, not much is known about entrepreneurs being able to always balance work and family demands. In other words, conflict seems to be inevitable in most discussions of work and family life. This seems to raise issues concerning the possible role

that work-family conflict will play in the psychological adjustment among lawyers in private practice.

Apart from work-family conflict, it is also necessary to consider job-demand control as an important factor in the investigation of psychological adjustment of lawyers as entrepreneurs. In private practice, lawyers are able to shape their work activities and respond to demands as considered necessary. According to Ekore & Okekeocha (2012), entrepreneurship offers the opportunity to exercise significant control over job demands. It is a popular assumption that the lawyer in private practice like other entrepreneurs has wide latitude in terms of controlling the work activities. It is in this light that job demand control (instead of family demand control) is being considered as one of the variables that may play important role in the level of psychological adjustment among lawyers in private practice.

The job demand-control theory (also called the job strain model) was propounded by Karasek (1989). It is covered in the Karasek's four psychological categories of work: high strain jobs, passive jobs, low strain jobs and active jobs. The job demand-control position is one of the most influential models in research that describe the relationship between work and health. In the model (Karasek (1979), the job demand-control identifies two crucial job aspects in the work situation: job demand and job control. A review of 20 years of empirical research on this model (van der Doef & Macs, 1999) indicated that a distinction is drawn between the strain aspects of the model which shows that individuals working in a high strain job (high demand-low control) experience the lowest wellbeing. Reflections on the Karasek's demand-control model by researchers show that the model's original conceptualisation of job demand as mental workload has greatly been ignored. Instead, emphasis has been largely placed on defining job demands more as physical demands and organisational constraints. This has led to discrepancies in the results of several studies. While

the model has stimulated much research during recent years, it is difficult to be precise about which aspects of psychological demands or decision latitude are most important in the model and for what categories of worker (Karasek, 1979). It is obvious therefore that it may not be easy to conclude that job demand-control is only an issue for employees in paid employment. Succinctly put, it may be an important variable among several others that can influence the psychological adjustment of lawyers in private practice.

According to Greenhouse and Powell (2006), role experience offers five categories of resources that may be acquired by an individual namely: skills and perspectives (e.g. interpersonal skills), psychological and physical resources (e.g. self-efficacy), social capital resources (e.g. networking, information), flexibility (e.g. flexible work arrangements) and material resources (e.g. money) (Crain & Hammer, 2013). Flexible work arrangement is a reflection of the extent which job demands can be controlled. Among entrepreneurs, particularly lawyers in private practice, there could be high demand to survive and manage the uncertainties of entrepreneurship while the extent of control being exercised may be dependent on forces external to the lawyer. Based on the assumptions, the following questions come to focus:

What is the direction of relationship between work-family conflict and psychological adjustment among lawyers in private practice?

What role will job-demand control play in psychological wellbeing among lawyers?

Will work family conflict and job demand-control play a combined role in psychological adjustment among lawyers in private practice?

The questions have necessitated the following hypotheses:

a. There will be significant negative relationship between work-family conflict and psychological adjustment among lawyers in private practice.

b. There will be significant positive relationship between job-demand control and psychological adjustment among lawyers in private practice.

c. Work-family conflict and job-demand control will significantly predict psychological adjustment among lawyers in private practice.

Methods

Design: The study was designed as a survey to investigate the influence of work-family conflict and job demand-control in psychological adjustment of lawyers in private practice.

Sample: The study involved 156 lawyers purposively drawn from the population of those in private practice who operate sole practice and others as partners in law firms within Ibadan metropolis. The study had a response rate of 83.6%. While 37.8% of the participants are female legal practitioners, 62.2% are males. The age of respondents range between 24 and 55 years with a mean of 39.2 years (SD = 6.14). In the sample, 79.5% are married, while 18.5% are single. Another 1.9% in the sample is either separated divorced or widowed.

Instruments

Work-family conflict: Work-family conflict was assessed by the 14-item work-family conflict scale developed by Friedman and Greenhaus (2000). The scale distinguishes between work-family and family-work conflicts and between strain and time-based conflicts (while time-based conflict is experienced when time pressures associated with role prevents one from fulfilling the expectations of the other role. The scale is scored on a 5-point Likert response format that ranged from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". The scale provides a four-fold classification of work-family conflict (i.e. time-based WFC strain-based WFC, time-based FWC and strain-based FWC). Two items measure behavioural interference with family. Four items measure work interference with family, five items measure family interference with work, while two items measure tradeoffs. Sample items for the work-family conflict scale are 'when I spend

time with my family, I am bothered by all the things on the job that I should be doing' and 'because of my job responsibilities, the time I spend with my family is less enjoyable and more pressured'. For family-work conflict scale, sample items include 'the demands of family life interfere with achieving success in my career' and 'when I spend time on my job, I am bothered by all the things I should be doing with my family'. The coefficients for the WFC and FWC scales (each with 11 items) were 0.84 and 0.81 respectively. **Job- demand control** (or 'discretion' as used by Karasek) was measured by using 6-items from the 17-item Swedish Demand Control Support Scale, a revised version of job demand and control model. The six items measure time pressure and workload, while control/discretion items are concerned with opportunities for control, autonomy and decision-making in the work related environment. While sample items for job demand include 'Have to work very hard' and 'lots of work', examples of control items are 'allows you to make your own decisions' and 'allows freedom'. Response to each item was on a "Yes" or "No" format. The coefficient for the present sample is 0.88.

Psychological adjustment: Psychological adjustment was assessed by a 30-item ways of coping scale developed by Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis and Gruen (1986). The scale comprises of the dynamics of confrontive coping, distancing, self controlling and social support. The items used a 3-point Likert format, represented numerically as 1 – Used often, 2 – Rarely Used, 3 – Don't Use. Four items measure confrontive coping, sample items are: 'I did something which I didn't think would work, but at least I was doing something', 'I let my feelings out somehow'. Four items measure distancing. Samples of such items are: 'went along with fate', 'sometimes I just have bad luck', 'went on as if nothing happened'. Three items measure self controlling. The items are 'tried not to burn my bridges, but leave things open somewhat', 'I tried to keep my feelings to myself'.

Two items measure seeking social support. A Sample of such items is: 'talked to someone to find out more about the situation'. The coefficient for confrontive coping, distancing, self controlling and seeking social support is 0.76.

Procedure: The data collection that was supervised by a graduate student concentrated on Ibadan metropolis. A total of 180 questionnaires were distributed to principals and partners in law firms in Ibadan, but 156 were received and analyzed. The respondents voluntarily agreed to complete the questionnaires personally. Each Law firm was purposively visited and the partner and principals were approached individually to participate in the study. In some cases, three visits were made to recover questionnaires from each firm.

Results

Hypothesis one which states that there will be significant negative relationship between work-family conflict and psychological adjustment among lawyers was tested with the Pearson r. The result is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Summary result of Pearson r showing the relationship between work-family conflict and psychological adjustment among lawyers in private practice

S/N	Variables	N	X	SD	1	2
1	Work family conflict	156	28.62	9.45	-	
2	Psychological adjustment	156	114.79	14.33	-0.412**	-

Results above shows significant negative correlation between work family conflict and psychological

adjustment ($r=0.412$, $p<.01$). It indicates that as respondents' work-family conflict increases, their psychological adjustment reduces. Therefore, the hypothesis was confirmed as predicted.

The second hypothesis which predicted a significant positive relationship between job demand-control and psychological adjustment among lawyers was tested with Pearson r statistic. The result is presented below:

Table 2: Summary result showing the association of job demand- control and psychological adjustment among lawyers in private practice

S/N	Variables	N	X	SD	1	2
1	Job demand control	156	13.05	2.73	-	
2	Psychological adjustment	156	114.79	14.33	-0.185**	-

** $p<.01$

As shown in table 2 above, a significant positive correlation between job demand control and psychological adjustment among lawyers was reported ($r=-0.185$, $p<.01$). Findings indicate that as respondents' job demand-control is increasing, their level of psychological adjustment increases. Therefore, the hypothesis which predicted that job demand-control and psychological adjustment will be positively related is confirmed.

Finally, the hypothesis which proposed that work-family conflict and job demand- control will significantly predict psychological adjustment among lawyers in private practice was tested with multiple regression statistics. The result is presented as below:

Table 3: Summary of result showing the relative contributions of work-family conflict and job demand control in predicting psychological adjustment the respondents

Predictor	(\hat{a})	t	P	R	R ²	F	P
Work family conflict	-0.640	-5.86	<.05	0.46	0.212	0.55	<.05
Job demand control	-0.077	-2.85	<.05				

From the results, work-family conflict and job demand-control significantly predict psychological adjustment [$R^2 = 0.212$, $F(2,153) = 20.6$, $p<.05$]. The R value of 0.46 shows a multiple relationship between the independent variables and psychological adjustment. The results which find R^2 value of 0.212 shows that both work-family conflict and job demand-control jointly contributed 21.2% to the variation that explain psychological adjustment among lawyers in private practice. Also, the independent influence of each of the variables shows that both work-family conflict and job-demand-control predicted psychological adjustment independently ($\hat{a}=-0.640$, $t=-5.86$, $p<.05$) and ($\hat{a}=-0.077$, $t=-2.85$, $p<.05$) respectively. Therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed as proposed. However, male and female lawyers were not found to be significantly different on their level of psychological adjustment ($p>.05$).

Discussion

The investigation of psychological adjustment among lawyers in private practice involved the consideration of work-family conflict and job demand-control as possible factors of influence. Findings showed that significant negative relationship exists between work-family conflict and psychological adjustment among lawyers who are principal or part owners of their firms (otherwise known as entrepreneurs) was confirmed. It was found that work-family conflict negatively correlated with psychological adjustment. This implies that when the respondents experience increase in work

family-conflict, a corresponding decrease in their ability to adjust psychologically exist. In other words, the more a lawyer experience higher work-family conflict as an entrepreneur, the less he/she is capable of coping with the various physical and mental health challenges that are contained in the psychological adjustment operationally defined in the present study. Previous studies have confirmed this position. For example, Ijide (2013) reported that work and non-work balance significantly relates to military officers level of wellbeing. The study also supports Rantanen (2008) longitudinal perspective on work-family interface and psychological wellbeing and its revision which went further to clarify workers into active, passive, beneficial and harmful balance depending on the person's coping mechanisms (Rantanen *et al.*, 2011). The study has also found relationships between work-family conflict and psychological adjustment. This finding supports the premise that increased work-family conflict can lead to increased (mental) health concerns and problems that reduce psychological adjustment capacity. For example, Kinnunen and Mauno (1998) found a relationship between increased work-family conflict and increased physical symptoms or somatic complaints. In a related study, Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) discovered relationships between work-family conflict and overall physical health. Other researchers (e.g. Thomas & Ganster, 1995) have observed that increased work-family conflict is related to increased depression and other psychological issues. Also, Frone, Russell and Cooper (1993) observed that "Cross-sectional research provides consistent evidence that work-family conflict is positively associated with a host of adverse health-related outcomes".

Substantial evidence illustrates the deleterious effects of work – family conflict. Particularly, the interference or conflict between work demands and family life are associated with strain and dissatisfaction. Further, work – family conflict has been linked to greater health risks such as hypertension (Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1993), exhaustion, somatic

complaints, and alcoholism (Frone, Barnes & Farrell, 1994). Correlates between work-family conflict and negative psychological outcomes include depression (Frone, Russell & Barnes, 1996), diminished wellbeing (Hughes & Galinsky, 1994; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Van Rijswijk, Bekker, Rutte & Croon, 2004), and lowered family and job satisfaction (Greenhaus & Granrose, 1992). The several previous positions that showed significant link between work-family conflict and dimensions of wellbeing lend support to the present finding that showed similar position among lawyers in private practice. However, most of the previous findings did not reflect entrepreneurs, particularly those in the legal practice.

Indeed, past researches have made distinctions between the types of inter-role conflicts – WFC and FWC with each having its own unique antecedents and consequences as well (Frone *et al.*, 1993). For example, researchers agree that the stressors fueling work – family conflict are domain – specific, that is, stress in the work domain contributes to WFC and stress in the family domain contributes to FWC (Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998). Correspondingly, each domain appears to have support factors that alleviate the experience of WFC and FWC. Receiving instrumental support such as childcare or help with household work reduces FWC (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000). Social support factors in the workplace as well as supportive work programs that encourage work-family balance help ease WFC. With regard to individual-focused consequences of work-family conflict, Frone (2000) and Frone *et al.* (1996) found that both WFC and FWC were positively related to mood disorders, anxiety, and substance dependence disorders. However, FWC was more likely to correlate positively to psychiatric disorders than WFC. In a longitudinal study by Frone, Russell *et al.* (1993), at baseline, FWC and WFC were both related to high levels of depression in a community sample, although FWC was also correlated with poor health. At follow-up, WFC and FWC were still both associated with

elevated levels of depression. However, WFC was related to heavy alcohol consumption and FWC was related to poor physical health.

The hypothesis found a significant positive relationship between job demand control and psychological adjustment among lawyers as proposed. The finding showed that when entrepreneurs in law practice report capacity to exercise control over their job demands, they also report higher level of psychological adjustment to the vagaries of work. Specifically, the ability of the entrepreneurs in law practice to exercise significant measure of control over their job demands ultimately result in ability to cope effectively and adjustment. This indicates that when individuals' job-demand control is low, their ability to effectively adjust will be low as well. When that prevails, the individual is exposed to challenges that that can affect coping and adjustment. Previous studies provide empirical support to the position adduced in the present findings. The present findings support Ottu and Adekunle (2013) in their study that found university workers with high perceived work control reporting high work performance than workers with low perceived work control. In their study, the workers were able to balance family and work roles to create a feeling of control and wellbeing. The present position is supported by the role-stress theory earlier propounded by Kahn et al (1964). It states that if a given set of social roles impose conflicting role expectations and pressures toward a focal person, it can cause psychological conflict and role overload for the individual. It is not surprising therefore that job-demand control showed a significant positive association with psychological adjustment among entrepreneurs in law practice.

The confirmation of the third hypothesis found work-family conflict and job demand control as showing significant combined prediction of psychological adjustment. The findings showed that psychological adjustment can be influenced by both job-demand control and work family conflict. In a similar direction,

previous studies have confirmed the position found in the present study that covered entrepreneurs in private law practice. For example, Kinnunen and Mauno (1998) found a relationship between increased work-family conflict and increased physical symptoms or somatic complaints. Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) had earlier found significant relationships between work-family conflict and overall physical health. Other researchers (Thomas & Ganster, 1995) also suggested that increased work-family conflict is related to increased depression and other psychological pressures. The findings by Frone, Russell and Cooper (1993) lend support for the present findings as well. They observed in their "cross-sectional research that work-family conflict is positively associated with a host of adverse health-related outcomes". The psychological adjustment of individuals is a major dimension of health-related outcomes. However, male lawyers in private practice did not report any significant difference in their level of psychological wellbeing as envisaged.

Conclusion

The present study set out to investigate work-family conflict and job-demand control in their possible influence on psychological adjustment among lawyers in private practice in Ibadan, Nigeria. The study had included gender of participants, age and years of work experience as possible factors that may play important roles in adjustment of entrepreneurs in law practice but none did. It has been established in the present study that increase in work family conflict reduces psychological adjustment in the sample covered. Gender differences with respect to the sampled population is not a significant moderating variable in defining lawyers susceptibility to high or low levels of psychological adjustment.

The implication of the findings is that lawyers in private practice do not have issues with psychological adjustment based on age, gender or length of practice. Rather, balance in work-family demands and capacity

to control job demand play more significant roles in their psychological adjustment. A major recommendation therefore, is that in order to continually improve on the psychological adjustment of lawyers in private practice it is important to incorporate coping skills on maintaining work-family life balance during self development training programmes. It is also important to lay emphasis on exercising control over the demands on the job of private practice for lawyers. This has been found to have a direct link with adjustment.

Future researchers in the areas covered by this study are encouraged to increase the sample and scope as well as consider some other dispositional and situational factors because those involved in the present study only account for 21% to the prediction of psychological adjustment. A major limitation in the present study is that entrepreneurs in law practice that operate in other cities in Nigeria were not covered. When larger sample and dimensions are covered, generalisation would be enhanced.

Nevertheless, the present study has provided an empirical position for the inclusion of psychological adjustment of lawyers in private practice to the body of literature on entrepreneurship and adjustment. It is expected that the outcome of this study will stimulate increased interest in the area covered by the research.

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