

Waged Labour and the Domestic Behaviour of Female Employees in Ekiti State

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Abstract: The study examines the behavioural consequences of the multiple role of Women both in the world of work and as wives, mother and homemaker on their involvement behaviour at the home front. A representative sample of 174 respondents from four major professions in Ekiti State were selected for the study. Questionnaire was the major instrument of the research and findings reveal that the dual role of women adversely affect the conjugal relationship between the spouses and their children. Recommendations were made at the end of study for improvement.

Keywords: Female, behaviour, domestic, consequences, role

INTRODUCTION

In traditional African Society, much importance is placed on the quality roles of the male gender as the breadwinner of the family that the male homosapiens asset themselves over the opposite sex. The boy child from infant was thought to be aggressive, bold, adventurous, assertive, domineering etc while his female counterpart was socialized to be passive, dependent, gullible, less assertive etc^[1].

All these play a predictive role on both sexes in their live endeavours. Hence while the society see certain professions as men's preservation, the women were traditionally home bound as home keepers. This has increased the subservient position of women. In the Roman times, women were regarded as chattels or slaves, a derigeour which was supported even by the English law of the time^[2]. This has dampened the morale of most women to actualize themselves thus limiting their rights in comparism with that of their male counterparts in the society.

The introduction of western education was therefore not really considered an avenue of women interference. Infact, the education of the female gendre, in the language of Oyeleye^[3] is an exemption and not a rule. Most families would rather educate their male members who are seen as movers of society than the females who are generally believed to end up wha acquisition in knowledge in the kitchen. Oyeleye^[3] states further that, the womenfolk, is believed to have enough task of nurturing the home than being overlaboured with any other task. The women to him are the beast of burden' who often forgotten by the society inspite of the assigned roles they play as active agents of development.

Okpala^[4] captured the excruciating conditions of the women in a 'Pidgin' write-up thus:

Our people day talk am say na mama dem work to dey put eye for our pikin dem life, as dem dey grow. Our mama dem get plenty work, na dem dey sell food for market, na dem dey draw water for drink and for wash body, na dem dey give our small animal dem like goat and fowl to dey chop. Even sef, na mama dem dey gather firewood, na dem dey cook food wey we dey chop, na dem dey wash cloth wey we dey wear for body, na dem dey put eye for papa body when dem no well. Na mama dem dey born pikin and put eye for piking dem body. Our mama dem wahala plenty plenty^[4].

Okpala's commentary reveals quite a lot. Not only were they (women) engaged in house keeping roles; they were also noticeable performing outer household chores yet they were hardly recognized as playing any meaningful role in societal development. The United Nations Organization in a deliberate effort to bring the womenfold out of this enclaves declared the years 1975 through 1985 as the United Nations decade for women. The governments of every country has also been urged to place emphasis of women education to enhance their position and roles in a nations development. This has led to the creation of a special unit at the Federal Ministry of Education, christened; the women education unit' to uplift women education; in the Country since 1989.

The educational policy of the Federal Government formulated in 1989 states thus:

With regard to women's education, special efforts will be made by ministers of education and local government authorities in conjunction with ministries of community development and Social Welfare and Information to encourage parents to send their daughters to school^[5].

While there are laws enacted to prevent the early withdrawals of female children from School there are also improvement in the admission quota of female children in schools. This no doubt has been helping in the increasing awareness of women on their self-worth as co-agent of development. Okolo^[6] rightly observed the increasing independence of women as a result of their attainment of higher education which has a 'liberating effect on them in terms of intellectual and economic freedom. Olusanya^[7] aptly summarized this thus:

Education has brought the women out of their traditional enslaves:

Their lifestyles according to him has been re-pattern severally along three interwoven roles; of 'traditional housekeeping', 'housekeeping with a job as complimentary' and 'alternating home and work roles'.

The above is premised on the fact that the men were no longer capable of procuring for all the needs of the family in view of the deterioration experienced in paid employment witnessed in inflationary trends, cuts in government expenditure and declining wages brought about by Structural Adjustment Programme^[8-10].

This has brought the women folk to limelight in the labour market hence making them constituting an unavoidable workforce to reckon with as they augment the family income with their income generated from waged employment.

The import of the ongoing discussion is that, not only are the women performing their traditional role of child bearing and childrearing as well as housekeeping, they combined this with waged employment; thereby creating role strain for them as they battled within themselves to meet societal obligations expected of them.

Kaita^[11] was of the opinion that the management of the home remains primarily the responsibility of the wife not minding her other roles outside the home. This was the contention of Strongberg and Kanas^[12] when they reported from asering research finding that men are usually detached from household work as they give more commitment to industries where the income for the sustenance of the family comes from. The women therefore is believed to be shirking in her responsibility if she fails to maintain the homefront perfectly well to expectation. In a similar research McLughlin^[13] also reveals this societal expectation of her as homekeeper saying that the traditional belief of the woman is that of a wife, mother is that of a wife, mother and homemaker and that she is held responsible for any laxity in any of these core area. This view is in line with that of Anyanwu^[14] above, both paying little attention to the out-of-home role they play even to compliment their breadwinners efforts.

This is a discrimination, which was believed in some quarters to have been deliberately plotted to restrict the female worker from unhealthy competition with their male counterpart at the labour market Rice^[15].

This argument has been vociferously rejected by Parson and Synder^[16] saying that the role of the male is instrumental which attainment lies outside the home while that of the woman is expressive and this explains why the men were not as noticeable as their female counterpart performing family work.

All this explain why the female gender do have role-strain as they cannot perfectly hold on to their multiple roles^[17]. Thus according to her the severe demands from the paid job do create an unavoidable work overload resulting into role-strains for her. This was the view of Goode^[18] when he asserts that the professional accomplishment do deflect her from her obligation as homemaker. This according to him affects her professional commitment thus leading to structural strain. In support of the above; Hall^[19] and Spanier^[20] also stressed that working mothers do experience inter-role conflict as well as overload than those unmarried.

Devereux, Cox and Cox^[21] was were assertive that role-overload was rampant among young married women as they combine both marriage and family roles with paid employment due to time demand.

Both Devereux, Bronfenbrenner and Rodgers^[22]: In different studies conducted both in Ghana and Nigeria came out with the same findings that fatigue stress and anxiety are often the reward of women combining both paid jobs with childcare responsibilities others who share same opinion are Weiss and Emery^[23] who attributed the burden of childcare to the dual-role of the working females/mothers. They even stress further to say that other determinant of the wife-mother strain is the size of the family.

The above no doubt has been playing an operative value on the domestic behaviour of the woman especially as it relates to general cleanliness, food preparation, meeting the sexual desires of her spouse and other social activities Hetherington, Cox and Cox^[24]. Her failure at fulfilling any of these societal expected role necessarily brings her in coalition course with other family member especially her husband with a consequential effects on the family. Thus according to Kayongo and Onyango^[25], it will take the understanding of the two of them to same the family from disintegration.

In a deliberate attempts to avoid this trend within the home, the assistance of housemaids is usually sought and this has in most cases compounded the problem either by the emotional strains it gives the woman as she becomes far removed from household chores thereby

endearing the housemaid to her husband and children. Where she resorts to the services of daycare centers or crèche, it gives the children the trauma of alienation and desertion by both parent.

Flowing from the foregoing discussions, this paper seeks to examine the behavioural consequences of the multiple roles of women both in the world of work and the home front on their domestic behaviour.

The study also seeks the following objectives from the major aim above.

- Knowing the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents
- Identification of the general role of married women
- Highlighting the multiple roles of working mothers
- As well as pinpoint and determining the conflict between these roles
- Make recommendations on possible way out of these conflicting roles.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A random sample of one hundred and seventy-four respondents were selected for the research. They were selected from four professions two of which are believed are women preserves (Teaching and Nursing). Questions were asked on their socio-economic characteristics as well as on the effects of their dual role on their domestic behaviour. The questionnaire was the major research instrument and it was complimented with the interview method. The data were analysed in percentages.

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

The research findings reveals that all our respondents are female and that about half of the total population 49.4% were within the age-group 21-30 years. Next were those within age group 31-40 years 23.6%. Only a small proportion of the studied population were above fifty years Table 1.

On Religion, adherent of the Christian religion dominate the population studied with about one-fifth 82% of the total respondents. Islamic worshippers were less than one-fifth 15.5% of the population while those in other unspecified religion occupy a negligible proportion of the sampled population.

Nearly up to three-quarter 70.1% of the sampled population had tertiary education while another one-tenth other professional certificates 11.5, 12.1% of the respondents had secondary school education. The implication of this is that the sampled population is a highly literate one.

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents in percentage

Variable	N	Percentage (%)
Sex:		
Male	-	-
Female	174	100
Age:		
Below 20 years	13	7.47
21-30 years	86	49.4
31-40 years	41	23.6
41-50 years	32	18.4
50 years	02	1.1
Religion		
Christianity	144	82.8
Islam	27	15.5
Traditional	00	-
Others (specify)	03	1.7
Literacy Level		
Below Secondary School	11	6.3
Secondary School	21	12.1
Tertiary school	122	70.1
Others (professionals)	20	11.5
Occupation		
Teaching	35	20.1
Civil Servant	68	39.1
Nursing/Doctor	46	26.4
Bankers	25	14.4
Income (per month)		
Below N10,000	17	9.8
10,000-15,000	23	13.2
15,000-20,000	33	18.9
20,000 +	99	56.9
Marital Status		
Single	-	-
Married	159	91.4
Separated	11	6.3
Divorced/Widow	04	2.3
Dependants:		
Below 2	18	10.3
3- 4	36	20.7
5- 6	83	47.1
6 and above	38	21.8
What time do you wake-up for work daily		
4.00am-4.30am	14	8.0
4.30am-5.30 am	21	12.1
5.30am-6.00am	123	70.7
6am daily	16	9.2
What time do you retire home for work		
2pm-4pm daily	29	16.7
4pm-6pm daily	77	44.3
6pm-8pm daily	30	17.2
8pm and above	38	21.8
On whether family employs the service of househelps		
Yes	110	63.2
No	64	36.8
No response	-	-
How helpful are these domestic servants?		
Very helpful	16	9.2
Not helpful at all	48	27.6
No Response	07	4.1
On whether husband(s) assist in household work		
Yes	36	20.7
Partially	18	10.3
No	117	67.2
N/R	03	1.7
If yes, what type of assistance?	N = 54	%
Bathing for children in the morning	23	42.6
Assisting with kitchen work	06	11.0
Taking children to school	21	20.4
No assistance	03	5.6

Note: figure may not add up to 100 because of rounding

Very many of them are in the teaching and Nursing Profession 46.5%. This two profession are believed to be women professions. About two-fifth 39.1% of the population work in the ministries with lesser degrees while about 5% are in the banking Industry. The implication of this again is that very many of them are in jobs which are highly demanding while the banking profession demand a lot of overtime work from them to health profession demands attention all the times especially in terms of emergency and call-duty.

Inspite of the high demand of their work it is not as motivating especially in terms of material rewards. About two-third 56.9% earn above twenty thousand naira monthly while less than twenty percent earns between N15,000 and N20,000 naira only. About ten percent earn just about the minimum wage in the country. This generally reflects the general economic hardship they go through yet they found difficulty quitting the job for a more comfortable role of full time housewives.

An overwhelming majority of our respondents are married 91.4%, only about nine percent are either separated or divorce while none was single. This is not unexpected since the research focus is on women workers but it worthy to note the effects of their dual roles on the home front, moreso that not less than 69% of them have a large family size to cope with their meager salary. 21.8% respondents reported having over six dependants while about half of the total sampled population over having between five and six dependents.

This explains why many of them 20.1% do wake up for work as early as 4.00am even-though Ado-Ekiti metropolis, the research location is yet to be confronted with Chronic traffic problems of most Urban cities (like Lagos, Kao, Kaduna, Port Harcourt etc) in Nigeria.

Twenty one percent respondents reported retiring home late daily (i.e., 8 pm and above) 17.2% between 6 and 8 pm and 44.3% between 4 and 6 pm. The implication of this is that they hardly do have enough time both for themselves and the family; hence majority resorted to the employment of house helps 63.2% while others believes, they can only make things get worse for them especially as it bothers on their relationship with their spouse and children. Inspite of this, about 70% still believe that those house helps are very useful in that they often save them from embarrassing situations on most occasions.

Many of the respondents reported not enjoying the support of their husbands especially when they need them most. 67% respondents were of this view while about ten percent says they enjoy them partially. Of the fifty-four percent that says they (husbands) do help in a way, forty eight percent said they do offer assistance in getting the children prepared for school while only about 0% reported having them around during kitchen period Table 2.

Table 2: On the effect of multiple roles working women on their domestic behaviour

Variable	Responses	
	Yes	No
My job keeps me away from my family most of the time (N = 174)	161 (92.5)	13 (7.5)
I fell I have much to do than (N = 174)	149 (85.6)	25 (14.4)
I can handle comfortably	168 (96.6)	6 (3.4)
I do spend more h in my office than at home (N = 174)	148 (87.1)	26 (15.1)
The demand of my job is affecting my family in many ways (N = 170)	133 (82.1)	29 (17.9)
I do worry over the plight of my children in the hand of househelps/care-providers (N = 162)	140 (84.3)	26 (15.7)
After work, I retire home with fatigue which affects other things at home (N = 166)	159 (92.4)	15 (8.7)
My job make it difficult for me to be the kind of wife/mother I had loved to be (N = 172)	126 (74.1)	48 (28.2)
The demand of my work has caused serious disagreement/conflict between my husband and I several times (N = 170)	63 (39.1)	98 (60.9)
Even though my job is demanding, the pay is encouraging (N = 161)	123 (76.4)	38 (23.6)
I find difficulty seeing myself as a full time housewife (N = 161)	116 (71.6)	46 (28.4)
I have the feeling that my children do think that I am shrinking in my responsibilities toward them (N = 162)	123 (75.0)	41 (25.0)
The activities of househelps (maid) can be dangerous especially if she taken over cooking for the family (N = 164)	111 (67.7)	53 (32.3)
Do you know of anybody whose home has been disintegrated because of the activities of housemaids (n = 164)	156 (95.1)	08 (4.9)
To avoid family disintegration, government should implore employers of labour to release working mothers by 2pm everyday (N = 164)		

Note: Figures may not add up to 100 because of rounding

On the effects of the multiple roles of the women on their domestic behaviour, an overwhelming majority 92.5% of them believe that their jobs has been a major reason for their distance from their families. Not less than four-fifth 85.6% of the total respondents do regrets not being able to meet family obligations saying that they do spend more h on office work to the neglect and detriment of the home. This has been a major concern to very many of them to the extent that it has even affected their level of job commitment. Eighty-two percent respondent were not happy keeping their little children in the care of househelps many of whom are not experienced and other day-care centers where due attention are not usually given.

Not less than three quarter 74% reported having had serious matrimonial crises due to the high demand of their work on them. This is even more biting when the job is not motivating them 60.9%. The implication again is that they are reluctantly doing the job moreso that they use the meager salary to compliment the efforts of their spouse at home. Infact, they find difficulty guiting their jobs as they could find any better alternative.

Seventy-one percent of the women do nurse the feeling of not seeing themselves as real mothers and that this may present them as irresponsible character even to their children.

In spite of this, May 75% see the employment of househelps as detrimental in many respect as some do cause the breakdown of may relationship.

CONCLUSION

That women multiple roles as wife, mothers, homemaker and workers in the labour market do cause a lot of stress which often tell on their relationship with spouse and children needs no further debate. It is considered the best thing for women to get rid of the stereotypic belief about them as only baby factories by going to compete favourably well with their male counterpart at the labour market.

The performance of this roles has been the major hindrance to their performance efficiency at the home front. To avoid this embarrassing situation, it is suggested that the government should enact policies to bail them and the society at large from hardship caused by their multiple roles.

Maternity leave has been entrenched in most organizations with the backing of the government. It should also be implored on orgnaisations to make it a policy having a day-care centers nearly to take care of the children of nursing mothers.

There is also the need for an enabling policy to release working mothers early to be able to attend to pressing demand of the home.

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