

Professional Women's Adjustment Patterns Towards Spouses' Attitude to Their Jobs

¹Nonso Bisong, ¹Pauline Ekuri and ²Uche Ajake

¹Faculty of Education, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

²Faculty of Education, Cross River University of Technology, Calabar, Nigeria

Abstract: The survey research design was used to measure professional women's adjustment strategies to their spouses' attitude towards their job and examine how they cope with punctuality to their work. Two null hypotheses were also formulated, using a stratified random sample of 450 professional women. A survey questionnaire was designed to elicit responses from the respondents on how they cope with their spouses' attitudes to their jobs and how they cope with punctuality to their jobs. Results of the analysis reveal that majority of the women choose to explain their job circumstances to their husbands and discuss the nature and reason for overtime. With regards to punctuality, they make preparations at night for the next day. Furthermore, the result on differences in adjustment patterns, reveal that professional women in the banking sector adjust better to spouses' attitude than their colleagues in the other sectors under study, while the professional women in the government ministries and schools adjust better with regards to punctuality to work. Based on the findings, it was recommended that sectors where professional women exhibit lower adjustment capacity; policies should be relaxed to facilitate their balancing between their work and home.

Key words: Professional women, adjustment patterns, attitude, jobs

INTRODUCTION

The choice of engaging in a career obviously has both negative and positive consequences for a professional woman. To give maximum attention to research, may mean sacrificing the home. In this era of technological advancement and modernity, most women have attained professional heights and status in their various job settings, others are channelling much energy and attention to professionalize in their career. In the bid to achieve this, most professional women run into role-conflicts, torn between the intense desire to pursue their career aspirations and dreams, as well as fulfil their marital roles as wives and mothers. This study focuses on the adjustment patterns of professional women in Rivers state Nigeria, to their spouses' attitude towards their job. Rivers state is one of the commercial nerve centres of the Nigeria's economy and its cosmopolitan nature has attracted an influx of public and private organizations with a high concentration of professional women in these organizations. A lot these of professional women have encountered problems with their spouses in this area, many marital homes have been threatened with divorce and some have even hit the rocks as spouses complain bitterly about the nature of their wives jobs, which they claim have resulted in utter neglect and abandonment of their marital responsibilities. Most professional women are

becoming wiser now, as they want to keep both their husbands (home) and their jobs (professional aspiration). To achieve this great feat, they devise strategies to cope up with their spouses' perception and attitude to their jobs. It is against this backdrop, that this study is set to determine professional women's adjustment patterns to their spouses' attitude towards their jobs and examine how professional women cope with punctuality to work. Two null hypotheses were also formulated to determine if significant differences exist in the adjustment patterns of professional women to their spouse's attitude to their jobs and the professional women's adjustment patterns to punctuality to work.

Conceptual framework: The study is based on some conceptual and theoretical issues that give it a proper direction and focus. It is believed that professional women make adjustment in order to cope up with roles that make pressing demands on them. Adjustment according to Chauhan (1978), has to do with one's reactions to the pressures and demands imposed upon him by the social environment. Lazarus (1976) conceptualized adjustment as consisting of 2 kinds of process, fitting oneself into given circumstances and changing the circumstances to fit one's needs. It is also concerned with ways in which an individual manages his or her affairs. Professional women who are faced with their

spouses' attitude towards their jobs, make adjustment to accommodate their feelings and also maintain their jobs in order to live a healthy life. The role conflict model as stated by Schneider (1988) and Auge (1997), best describe the adjustment patterns of professional women. They argue that role conflict is an inevitable problem that occurs when an individual discovers that the two roles he or she is playing is making conflicting demands.

Professional women in trying to play the role of career people as well as housewives and mothers at the same time, experience much of role conflicts. To balance between the conflicting roles; adjustment becomes imperative.

Literature has confirmed that coping with spouses' attitude and perception to their job and satisfying professional aspirations is a major area of conflict for professional women. Scanzoni and Scanzoni (1994) in a research, conclude that men with less education and less prestigious occupations, a wage earning wife could appear threatening by making the husband's work seem less valuable. Conversely, husbands with better education tend to be more egalitarian in gender-role norms and are more favourable to wives employment. White *et al.* (1992) in a study interviewed married professional women, 58% of them were successful in their jobs. They attributed their success to their partners being very supportive of their careers. One of them said that her husband set her off in the first place, because he said that he didn't want a coffee drinking wife, he wanted a wife who worked. The secret of a successful career she said is having the right husband. Henning and Jardin (1978) in another study on how managerial women cope with their husbands, discovered that their strategy is to discuss the responsibilities they have at work with their husband's vis-à-vis the responsibilities they carry at home and they reach a workable conclusion on how best to share these responsibilities. Where the husband is unable to assist due to pressure in his own job, a house help can assist to relieve some of the burden off the managerial woman, especially in the area of cooking and laundry for her husband. Richard (1997) narrated her experiences and challenges she faced as a medical doctor, to set up a clinic in Mali and the support she received from her husband. She affirmed that her husband has been there by her side, he never lacked understanding for her, he always helped her dissipate anxieties and encouraged her always. Townsend (2001) in a study on work/family challenges and solutions, discovered that most women indicated they received support from their husbands. One of the women interviewed Lori Fairchild, a women's enterprise executive editor said her husband's support has made all the difference in her own professional success. Her

husband has always accepted his fair share of trips to the doctor and comes home early to look after their daughter when she has an important meeting or deadline to meet in the office. Spitze and Waite (1981) in a study on husband's perceived attitude on wife's employment discovered that where the husband felt that the family needs have been adequately taken care of, he had no problems with his wife engaging in paid employment.

The issue of punctuality has also been a long-standing problem needing solution. Most professional women have had problems in their workplaces with their bosses because of this. Townsend (2001) interviewed some professional women in Dallas, United states to determine the challenges and dilemma they face in work and home and how they tackle them to ensure punctuality to work, she found out that their main strategy to ensure punctuality, is to get organized the night before and never go to bed thinking they will accomplish everything early in the morning. One of the women interviewed Beth Jones, a marketing manager in a private cooperation, says her creative solution is to get her kids dressed up the night before and let them sleep in the clothes they'll wear to school because she got tired of fighting battles every morning. Though it sounds awful she said, but she discovered they never went late to school and work any more. Lisa Williams, vice president of a marketing pest doctors Inc., a private company, says her own strategy was to first identify what always hangs her up in the morning. She discovered that it was the time she spends looking for the kid's socks every morning. So, she solved that problem by buying 2 dozen pairs for each of her sons. Lateness ceased onwards.

The previous study able to highlight adjustment patterns of professional women to their spouses' attitude and perception of their job and how they cope with punctuality to work. The variable that has to do with punctuality, lacked empirical evidence significantly. It is also remarkable that there is a serious deficiency in local literature of the two variables. In fact, it is almost non-existent, yet these are critical areas that determine the success or failure of professional women in their careers in Nigeria. Most of the studies sited are foreign and it is believed that the study will significantly fill up the obvious gap in literature. It will also achieve the sole aim of determining the adjustment patterns utilized by professional women in coping with spouses' attitude to their jobs principally in Rivers State, Nigeria.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in the two senatorial districts in Rivers State of Nigeria. They are Rivers East,

West and South East. They are basically 2 towns in each of these districts where professional women are concentrated; they are Port Harcourt (Rivers East), Eleme (Rivers West) and Ahoda (Rivers South East). These towns were chosen based on their functional status, as centres that have attracted a high number of companies, ministries, schools and parastatals. A total of 450 professional women were chosen using stratified random sampling. Organizations were stratified along four major sectors of the economy to ensure that the different strata used in the study were adequately represented (Joe, 1992). They include the ministry, banks, schools and oil/gas industries. The ages of the women sampled, ranged between 30-59 years.

A survey questionnaire was designed by the researchers and used for data collection. The questions were worded in a way that respondents felt comfortable answering. The questionnaire had 2 sections. Section A elicited background information of respondents, while section B elicited information on how professional women cope with their spouses' attitude to their work and complain about hours spent at work. It also elicited information from them on how they cope with punctuality to work. The content validity of the instrument was ascertained by test construction experts and reliability test result, ranged from 0.8203- 0.9404.

The questionnaire was personally administered by the researchers, with the help of some field assistants and retrieved back after some days. The variations in the number of responses collated were dependent on the number that attempted the questions. Simple percentages and independent t-test analyses were used for the analyses of the data to enhance understanding.

RESULTS

Variable 1 in Table 1 shows that 3% of respondents sampled are indifferent to spouses' complaining attitudes, 22% try to come back early, while 75% explain job circumstances for understanding. Variable 2 shows that the number of respondents whose spouses' are unsupportive of their working overtime, 6% avoid discussing their jobs, while 29% reduce their number of overtime and 66% discuss the reason and nature of overtime, with their spouses.

Result on Table 2 shows that the adjustment pattern to spouses' attitude to job of professional women are not significantly different in the ministry ($t = 0.104$ $p > 0.05$), schools ($t = 1.181$, $p > 0.05$) and oil/gas sector ($t = -0.68$, $p > 0.05$). But there is a significantly better adjustment among professional women in the banking sector ($t = 2.114$; $p > 0.05$) than their counterparts in the other two sectors on spouses' attitude to job.

Table 1: Adjustment patterns of Professional Women to spouses' attitude to job

Variable	Adjustment pattern	N	Total (%)
Reaction to complain about hours spent at work	Indifferent (1)	8	2.5
	Try to come back early (2)	71	22.3
	Explain job circumstances for understanding (3)	239	75.2
	Total	318	100.0
Unsupportive spouse on over time	Avoid discussing job (1)	17	5.5
	Reduce number of overtime (2)	87	28.5
	Try to discuss nature and reason for overtime (3)	201	65.9
	Total	305	100.0

Table 2: Independent t-test analyses: A comparison of adjustment patterns to spouses' attitude to job of professional women in the different sectors under study

Type of organization	N	\bar{x}	S.D.	t
Government Ministry	64	5.02	1.05	0.104
Bank	48	5.43	1.075	2.114*
School	101	5.54	0.58	1.181
Oil/Gas	82	5.34	0.82	-0.068
Total	295			

Significant at 0.05 level; $df = 293$; $t = 1.96$

Table 3: Professional women's adjustment patterns to punctuality to work

Variable	Adjustment pattern	N	Total (%)
Punctuality to work	Go to bed early (1)	117	28.7
	House help assist in work early (2)	66	16.2
	Prepare at night for next day (3)	224	55.0
	Total	407	100.0

Table 4: Independent t-test analysis: A comparison of the adjustment patterns to punctuality to work of professional women in the different sectors under study

Type of organization	N	\bar{x}	S.D.	t
Government Ministry	82	1.97	0.78	4.168*
Bank	77	2.415	0.885	-0.074
School	134	2.015	0.865	-2.007*
Oil/Gas	114	2.41	0.888	-0.728
Total	407			

*significant at 0.05 level; $df = 405$; $t = 1.96$

Table 3 shows that majority of professional women ensure they are punctual to work by preparing at night for the next day. About 55% of them fall within that category. About 29% go to bed early, while 16% get house helps to assist with work early in the morning.

The result on Table 4 shows that professional women in government ministry ($t = 4.168^*$; $p < 0.05$) and those in the schools ($t = -2.007^*$; $p < 0.05$) have significantly better adjustment pattern to punctuality than their counterparts in the oil/gas ($t = 0.728$; $p < 0.05$) and banking sectors ($t = 0.074$; $p < 0.05$). No significant difference exists in the adjustment patterns of professional women to punctuality in the oil/gas and banking sectors.

DISCUSSION

The various forms of adjustment patterns adopted by professional women towards, the attitude of their spouses

to their jobs, show that majority of professional women choose to explain the nature of their job circumstances to their husbands. Among the respondents whose spouses are unsupportive of their working overtime, majority of them discuss the nature and reason for overtime with their spouses: These adjustment strategies promote understanding and peace between them and it agrees with the findings of Henning and Jardin (1978). A comparison of inter-sectoral analysis of the result reveals that professional women in the banking sector have a higher adjustment pattern to spouses' attitude to job than their counterparts in the other sectors. This result is surprising and contrary to popular expectation, however, since professional women in the banking sector know what their job demands and that the long hours spent at work, is enough to generate a negative attitude to their jobs by their spouses. They make an extra effort by adopting a strategy to avoid such an unwholesome behavior and an atmosphere of strife. This can explain why they adjust better in that area.

The result of adjustment pattern of professional women to punctuality to work reveals that a good number of the women adopt the strategy of preparing at night for the next day. This is in line with Townsend (2001). A comparison of inter-sectoral analysis of result shows that professional women in the ministry and schools have a higher adjustment capacity to punctuality to work more than their counterparts in the banks and oil/gas sectors. This is not surprising with the evolution of new work ethics in the public institutions which includes the government ministry and schools, combined with an appreciable increase in the salary structure of public servants, since the inception of the new democratic regime. In Nigeria public civil servants and teachers including professional women in these sectors now take jobs more seriously in this new dispensation. This could be responsible for their better adjustment pattern.

CONCLUSION

This study has revealed the various patterns of adjustment strategies professional women adopt in balancing between their spouses' attitude and their work. That being the case, employers of labor should try to relax some of their policies in sectors particularly where

professional women exhibit a lower adjustment capacity to accommodate their interest, bearing in mind that time and energy is required to attend to their spouses and their homes. In view of this, the ministry of women affairs should sponsor periodic studies to find out problems of adjustment that professional women in the labor force encounter and to proffer solutions to them. They should also embark on awareness programmes to enlighten the public on the role professional women play in the productive sector; this will go a long way in improving marital relationship by changing spouses' attitudes towards professional women's jobs.

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