

The influence of organisational factors and work-family conflict on organisational commitment among working parents

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of organisational factors and work-family role conflict on organisation commitment among working parents. The participants in the study comprise 200 employees of banking, armed forces, educational, and health institutions with a mean age 37.52 years. About 57% are men while 43.5% are women. Validated scales are used for data collection with data analysed using appropriate test statistics. Results reveal that employees with high work-family conflict are more committed to their jobs, while there is no significant difference in organisational commitment between the senior and the junior staff. Other findings suggest workers in the banking institutions significantly score higher on organisational commitment than workers in other work sectors. The findings are discussed in line with the existing literature while the study recommends a need for effective organisational policies and practices in improving and encouraging organisational commitment.

Keywords: Job status, work-family conflict, organisational commitment, working parents

Introduction

Organisational commitment as a psychological concept has been identified as an important factor, which plays a significant role in the relationship between individuals and organisations. As a result, it has attracted the attention of researchers in different disciplines such as psychology, sociology and human resources management (Benligiray & Sonmez 2012), because the national economy is dependent on factors which includes companies and employment. With increase in economic growth and the subsequent competitive work environment, employees' commitment is seen as a key factor in achieving competitive performance (Shahnawaz & Juyal 2006), and also one of the crucial outcomes of the human resource strategies. This is because a committed workforce is more passionate about what they do and are more likely to put more effort into their work than the less committed employees (Akehurst, Comeche, & Galindo 2009). Committed employees have a greater tendency to notice where the organisation falls short and where improvements can be made than their less committed colleagues. This type of characteristic from a committed employee may be of great value to a company (Baron & Kreps 1999).

Organisational commitment is a feeling an employee bears for the organisation that he/she is working for (Swales 2002), which is also a function of the perceived compatibility between the individual and the organisation (Bateman & Strasser 1984). Researchers view organisational commitment as a kind of psychological commitment that makes an individual internalise the goals and values of the organisation, try hard to be a part of it and feel like a strong member of the family (Steers 1977; Mowday, Steers, & Porter 1979). It can then be said that organisational commitment is characterised by the strong desire to continue the membership of an organisation. In sum, the degree of commitment often determines the decision to stay with the organisation, as Clugston (2000) shows that individuals with a high degree of commitment are less likely to quit their jobs.

According to social exchange theory, employees' commitment and involvement may fluctuate, depending on the employees' perceived trust within the organisation (Blau 1964). However, a growing number of studies have questioned

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this theory and the claim of social exchange based explanation for employee attitudes (Farh, Hackett, & Liang 2007; Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan 2007; Tsui 2004). However, from Cropanzano and Mitchell's (2011) point of view, social exchange theory is one of the most prominent theories in understanding behaviour at the workplace, as it explains why trust in employees may lead to higher employee commitment, just as Nelson and Quick (2005) state that the theory reveals that the outcome is equal to the benefits minus the costs. Then, employee behaviour is the result of an exchange process of maximising the benefits and minimising the costs, indicating why the exchange process is an interaction between the organisation and the employee. Thus, when an organisation gives an employee a reward, it expects something from the employee in exchange, although employees' commitment may fluctuate, depending on his/her perceived trust. Organisational commitment has also been viewed as having an important place in the study of organisational behaviours because of the relationship between organisational commitment and attitudes and behaviours in the workplace (Yucel & Bektas 2012).

The commitment profiles theory has opened up new prospects in scientific thinking of organisational commitment, with increasing numbers of authors looking into the antecedents of and outcomes from commitment profiles (Wasti 2005; Somers 2009). According to the Newman and Sheikh (2012) study, factors of social, extrinsic and intrinsic rewards are vital in motivating commitment among employees while role clarity and satisfaction with the supervisor are the major determinants of emotional commitment. Likewise, Imran, Arif, Cheema & Azeem (2014) indicate that there is a positive significant relationship between organisational commitment and performance. To Iverson and Buttgieg (2008), the fewer the alternatives that are available to the continuance-committed employee, the more dedicated they tend to be. Equally, Babalola (2013) states that committed employees have a greater will to prepare and also confront organisational employment-related problems such as job insecurity and a threat to belonging. Orevic (2004) posits that organisations value their employees' commitment because of the assumption that committed employees engage in 'extra-role' behaviours, such as being creative or innovative. This is because commitment induces willingness to make personal sacrifice, perform beyond normal expectations and endure difficult times with an organisation (Orevic 2004; Steers 1977). In sum, organisational commitment is a bond the employee has with the organisation (Lambert & Paoline 2008). Rathi and Rastogi's (2009) study demonstrates the importance of organisational commitment as a determinant of organisational effectiveness.

However, some studies show inconsistent findings on organisational commitment. For instance, Aryee, Luk and Stone (1998) and Spreitzer and Mishra (2002) find no significant gender differences with regard to organisational commitment, while Hornung and Rousseau (2007) and Madsen, Miller and John's (2005) findings indicate that neither men nor women score higher on commitment. Cohen's (1992) study also shows that blue collar women employees exhibit more organisational commitment than men, while within the white collar jobs, men show more organisational commitment than women. Pala, Eker, and Eker's (2008) study reveals that specialist doctors, practitioner doctors and health officers tend to show greater organisational commitment feeling than nurses. Akintayo and Babalola's (2012) findings also show organisational commitment to be higher among respondents from private organisations than those from public organisations. Specifically, the results show that the respondents from private organisations demonstrate more affective and continuance commitment to organisational goal achievement than respondents from public organisations.

Work and family are two significant central points of adult life. Nevertheless, the expected roles of these two areas are not always compatible, thus creating conflicts between work life and family life (Netemeyer, Boles & McMurrian 1996). These conflicts are manifested as time strains and spill-overs of stress from work to home or vice versa. The conducive task environment coupled with a favourable home environment tends to foster organisational commitment among the workforce, just as the provision of adequate job incentives, which tend to facilitate effective management of work-family role conflict, is a strong factor in the prediction of organisational commitment (Akintayo 2010). According to researchers such as Baker & Geurts 2004; Schieman, Milkie, & Glavin 2009; and Voydanoff 2004, work-family conflict are associated with the demands placed on employees at work, as well as home demands and resources. Therefore, work-family conflict is a form of inter-role conflict in which, participation in the work role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family or vice versa (Greenhaus & Beutell 1985). Conflict between work and family is also important as it tends to lead to negative consequences, such as decreased organisational commitment and increased turn-over (Akintayo 2010; Ajiboye 2008; Mayer, Salovey & Caruso 2000).

Most researchers make the distinction between work-family conflict and family-work conflict and have conceptualised it as bidirectional; however, Ford, Heinen and Langkamer's (2007) research reveals that the concepts of work-family and family-work conflict are separate constructs. Work-to-family conflict occurs when experiences at work interfere with family life such as irregular working hours and work overload. Family-to-work conflict occurs when experiences in the family interfere with work life, like the presence of young children and unsupportive family members, for instance,

parents taking time off from work to attend to a sick child. For the purposes of this study, however, work-family conflict is taken to comprise the two i.e. work-family as well as family-work conflict.

The Nigerian family, just like any family from a developing economy, has been undergoing significant and functional changes without a corresponding shift in cultural policies. Few Nigerian families consist of a father who works and a mother who stays at home to care for the house and the children, despite advances in education and workplace compositions. Most work organisations continue to be guided by traditional work-place policies that are in place in those periods when men are the only category working while women stay at home. These arrangements are clearly distant from the reality of the present diverse work place that is increasingly populated with working mothers, single parents, and dual-career couples. This creates a potential for conflict and stress, as employees struggle with the demands of balancing paid work and home responsibilities. However, some findings have shown that individuals from more collectivistic cultures may experience fewer conflicts between work and family, in part because work and family are viewed as more integrated; meaning work is seen as a necessary and vital component of ensuring family well-being (Aryee *et al.* 1999; Yang, Chen, Choi, & Zou 2000). However, researchers (Alam, Biswas, & Hassan 2009; Boles, Howard, & Donofrio 2001; Greenhaus & Beutell 1985) maintain that work-family conflict increases when the work and family roles are salient or central to the individual's self-concept and when powerful negative sanctions for non-compliance with role demands are inevitable.

A large number of studies have examined the role conflict arising from combining work-family roles (e.g., Chinchilla, Leon, Torres, & Canela 2006). Heymann (2000) and Lambert's (1999) findings show that the burden of combining work and family is greatest among non-professional and marginalised workers, such as immigrants, because their jobs offer little flexibility or other family friendly resources. Kelly, Moen and Tranby (2011) assert that professional and managerial employees tend to differ systematically from other workers in ways that affect their work-family conflict because professional and managerial employees report greater flexibility and schedule control (Golden 2008; Schieman *et al.* 2009; Weeden 2005). Kelly *et al.* (2011: 267) also argue that higher status workers are likely to have more economic resources (income to purchase more reliable and more flexible childcare or eldercare), fewer family demands (fewer children or adult dependents in the home), and more family resources. All these may minimise work-family conflict and create work-family fit.

In the light of these reviews, this study is set to test the following hypotheses:

1. Individuals with low work-family conflict will be more committed to their organisation than counterparts who are high on work-family conflict.
2. Senior staff will be more committed to their organisation than the junior staffs.
3. Workers in banking institutions will be more committed to their organisation more than workers in other work institutions.

Methodology

Research design

The research is an *ex post facto* cross-sectional survey which is amenable to 2 x 2 factorial design since the variables are not directly manipulated but readily assumed two levels each. Job status occurs at two levels (senior and junior); work-family conflict also exists at two levels (high and low). The assessment of the influence of these variables is made on organisational commitment. Hypotheses 1 and 2 are analysed with 2 X 2 - analysis of variance (ANOVA) while hypothesis 3 is analysed with one-way Analysis of Variance.

Participants

The data for the study is drawn from employees of health, banking, armed forces and educational sectors in the city of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Ibadan, a city at the junction of the savannah and the forest, is the capital city of Oyo State and the third largest metropolitan area, by population, in Nigeria after Lagos and Kano. At Nigerian independence in 1960, Ibadan was the largest and most populous city in the country and the third in Africa after Cairo and Johannesburg. Ibadan is located in south-western Nigeria, 128 km inland, northeast of Lagos and 530 km southwest of Abuja, the federal capital of Nigeria.

These organisations are so considered simply because they are human service organisations. Organisational practices and service delivery are intangible and require substantial interpersonal contacts. Two hundred employees' responses are available for analysis, of which 56.5 per cent of respondents are male and 43.5 per cent are female. The participants' ages range between 24 to 65 years with a mean age of 37.52 (S.D = 8.44) years. Their job tenures with their organisations range from (1) to (18) years, with a mean tenure of 8 .4 years (SD. = 2.13).

Measures

A questionnaire comprising three sections is used. Section 'A' is focused on respondents' demographic data; Section 'B' measures work-family conflict using an 8-item index to assess inter-role conflict on a 5-point scale, ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree) to rate to what extent they agreed or disagreed (Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Conelly 1983). Samples of the items include 'my work schedules often conflict with my family life'. The authors report a coefficient alpha of 0.87 and, for this study, a coefficient alpha of 0.91 is established. Section C comprises a 24-item scale developed by Allen and Myer (1990) to assess organisational commitment. The coefficient alpha for this scale, according to the author, is 0.90, while for this study a coefficient alpha 0.75 is established. All items represent statements to which the subject responds on 5-point Likert-type scales, ranging from 5 'strongly disagree' to 1 'strongly agree'. For the purpose of this study, a pilot study is carried out with a total of thirty married workers to obtain a coefficient alpha for the scales.

Procedure

Prior to questionnaire administration, ethical clearance and permission for the research are obtained from the University Research Unit. In addition, consultations are held with the Head of Human Resource Departments in each of the study organisations to describe the study and survey instruments and the motive of the research. These initial attempt are taken to facilitate and obtain official permission and informed consent from collaborating organisations to use their employees for the study. These steps are considered essential because of the seeming difficulties inherent in seeking cooperation and assistance from busy workers. Purposeful sampling technique is used because of the need not to disrupt work activities; 60 questionnaires are placed with the human resource departments. The completed questionnaires are picked up at two weeks intervals. Of the 240 copies of the questionnaire, 216 are returned with sixteen not properly completed; giving a response rate of 93%, which is deemed acceptable. Respondents are asked to answer all questions. Names of participants are declared optional, so respondents are assured that their responses are completely anonymous and confidential. Only respondents who are currently employed full time and also married are included. Participants are also informed of the voluntary nature of participation.

Results

Hypotheses 1 and 2

Hypotheses 1 and 2 are tested using 2 x 2 ANOVA. Table 1 shows that the first hypothesis which states that individuals with low work-family conflict will be more committed to their organisation than their counterparts with high work-family conflict is inversely confirmed ($F \{1, 192\} = 16.30, P < 0.05$). Table 1 also shows that the second hypothesis, which states that senior staffs will be more committed to their organisation than the junior staff, is not supported ($F \{1, 192\} = 0.02; P > 0.05$).

Table 1 Summary table showing 2 x 2 ANOVA of the influence of job status and work-family conflict on organisational commitment among working parents

Variable	SS	df	MS	F	P
Work-family conflict	1443.87	1	1443.87	16.30	< .05
Job status	1.36	1	1.36	0.02	> .05
WFC X Job status	0.83	1	0.83	0.01	> .05
Residual	17007.67	192	88.57		
Total	18453.73	199	93.02		

The *post-hoc* analysis in Table 2 shows significant differences from the first hypothesis. It shows that individuals with high work-family conflict (= 77.81) are more committed to their organisation than individuals with low work-family conflict (= 72.44). This result is opposite to the hypothesis.

Table 2 Mean table showing group differences on organisational commitment among working parents

Variable	Level	N	
WFC	High	102	77.81
	Low	98	72.44
Job status	Senior	127	75.12
	Junior	73	75.19

Note: WFC means work-family conflict.

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis, which states that workers in the banking institutions will be more committed to their organisation than other work institutions, is tested using one-way ANOVA. The results in Table 3 show that workers in the banking institutions significantly scored higher on commitment to their organisation than workers in other work-groups ($F_{\{3,196\}} = 3.08, P < 0.05$).

Table 3 One-way ANOVA Summary table showing the effects work-groups on organisational commitment

Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between	832.720	3	277.57	3.08	< 0.05
Within	17678.80	196	90.20		
Total	18511.52	199			

The LSD *post-hoc* analysis in Table 4 indicates significant differences within banking institutions with ($= 78.56$) and those of health care institutions ($= 74.28$), educational sector ($= 73.12$) and armed forces sectors ($= 74.76$). However, no significant difference is found between health care institutions ($= 74.28$) and educational sector ($= 73.12$) and armed forces ($= 74.76$) and lastly between educational sector ($= 73.12$) and armed forces ($= 74.76$).

Table 4 LSD summary table showing work-groups differences and organisational commitment

Group Names	N	1	2	3	4
Health care institutions	50	74.28	-		
Educational sectors	50	73.12	1.16	-	
Armed forces	50	74.76	-4.80	-1.64	
Banking institutions	50	78.56	-4.28*	-5.44*	-3.80*

* The mean difference is significant at $P < 0.05$.

Discussion

The result of the first hypothesis indicates that employees with high work-family conflict are more committed to their organisations, as opposed to the hypothesis which specifies that employees with low work-family conflict will be more committed to their organisation than those with high work-family conflict. This is contrary to some findings which reveal that work-family conflict is often linked to negative consequences, such as decreased organisational commitment (Akintayo 2010; Ajiboye 2008; Mayer *et al.* 2000). However, this may be because the employees with high work-family conflict have personal coping strategies that enable them to control behaviours in their organisation. This type of view is supported by Brehn's (1966) finding which shows that individuals tend to select coping strategies that deal specifically with the focal stressor perceived to be responsible for low work control. Also, the deteriorating employment situation in Nigeria (Diejomaoh 2008) coupled with the global financial and economic crisis which has pushed the employment crisis to unprecedented proportions (Alabi 2014) may have led the employees to adapt themselves to cope with the job despite the work-family conflict so as not to lose their organisations and become worse off.

Hypothesis two, which states that senior staff will be more committed to their job than junior staff, is not supported, thus showing that no difference exists between the senior and junior workers' commitment to organisation. The possible explanation may be that there is no noticeable different in treatment given to the employees (junior or senior) in terms of welfare by the management of these organisations. Besides, employees cannot afford to be uncommitted to the organisation for fear of being fired due to the deteriorated employment situation (Alabi 2014; Diejomaoh 2008). Thus, it can also be argued that the high rate of unemployment in the country may be responsible for these findings. This may be because everyone who succeed in securing a job will do everything possible to retain the job, irrespective of the challenges they may be facing.

Hypothesis three, which states that individuals in the banking institutions will be more committed to their organisation than individuals in other work-groups of health, education and armed forces institutions is supported. That the banking employees show more organisational commitment than other work-groups may be because most banking institutions are privately owned and tend to pay better than other work sectors in Nigeria. This is supported by Akintayo and Babalola's (2012) findings, which indicate that organisational commitment tend to be higher among private organisations' employees than public organisations employees. It may be imperative on the employees to be committed otherwise they can be

fired, despite challenges arising from work-family conflict, whereas other work-groups in this study (health care institutions, educational sectors and armed forces) are either wholly or partially public organisations. Another probable explanation may be that there are better motivational factors which compensate for work-family conflict. In fact, the efficacy of reward cannot be underestimated; there is no gainsaying the fact that most bank employees receive better monthly payments than other employees in either public service or teaching professions. Besides, personal emoluments and other facilities that are made available to bank officials, but which employees in other establishments lack, may have been a major motivation keeping bank workers glued to their jobs despite work-family conflicts. Similarly, collectivistic culture helps cushion the effects of conflicts between work and family; also, work and family are viewed as necessary and vital components of ensuring well-being (Aryee, *et al.* 1999; Yang, *et al.* 2000).

Conclusion and recommendations

The results of this study are important for at least two reasons. First, they demonstrate a need for effective organisational policies and practices in the area of improving and encouraging the attachment of employees to their jobs. Second, they reveal that the influence of work-family conflict on job commitment varies across organisations. Thus, the adoption of support may have increased employees' perception of control over work-family roles.

Employers may need to view every worker as equally relevant to the attainment of the organisational goals, which calls for a need to motivate employees without any discriminatory attitudes. Management also needs to introduce family supportive elements in the work places to reduce the problem of work-family conflict. Such family support policies ought to include services that will make everyday management of family responsibilities easier, such as child care, flexitime, information services, seminars and family leave. Also, managers as agents of the organisations have the responsibility of playing a more active role in providing emotional and instrumental support to their subordinates. This activity can be achieved through increased empathy and flexibility on the part of the manager in handling employees' work-family matters. In terms of organisational actions, it recommends that training in human capital management will equip human resources practitioners with the knowledge base for effective, workplace-friendly policies and practices. Though this study has achieved a wide range of success, however, much can still be achieved in further similar studies as the major limitation of this study is that it can only be generalised to married workers. Future researchers should look into family supportive elements.

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Appendix

Inter-role conflict - Kopelman, Greenhaus, and Connelly (1983)

KEY: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, U - Undecided, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree. Indicate (x) against the option that best reflects your feelings.

		SA	A	U	D	SD
1	My work schedule often conflicts with my family life					
2	After work, I come home too tired to do some of the things I'd like to do					
3	On the job, I have so much work that it takes away from my other interests.					
4	My family dislikes how often I am preoccupied with my work while I'm at home.					
5	Because my work is demanding at times I am irritable at home					
6	The demands of my job make it difficult to be relaxed all the time at home					
7	My work takes up time that I'd like to spend with my family					
8	My job makes it difficult to be the kind of spouse or parent that I'd like to be					

Organisational commitment – Allen and Myer (1990)

		SA	A	U	D	SD
1	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organisation					
2	I enjoy discussing my organisation with people outside of it					
3	I really feel as if this organisation's problems are my own.					
4	I think that I could easily become as attached to another organisation as I am to this one.					
5	I do not feel like part of the family at my organisation					
6	I do not feel emotionally attached to this organisation					
7	This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me					
8	I do not feel a sense of belonging to my organisation					
9	I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit my job without having another one lined up					

10	It would be very hard for me to leave my organisation right now, even if I wanted to					
11	Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organisation now					
12	It wouldn't be too costly for me to leave my organisation now					
13	Right now, staying with my organisation is a matter of necessity as much as desire					
14	I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organisation					
15	One of the few serious consequences of leaving this organisation would be the scarcity of available alternatives					
16	One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organisation is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice: another organisation may not match the overall benefits I have here					
17	I think that people these days move from company to company too often					
18	I do not believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her organisation					
19	Jumping from organisation to organisation does not seem at all unethical to me					
20	One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organisation is that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain					
21	If I get another offer for a better job elsewhere I would not feel it was right to leave my organisation					
22	I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one organisation					
23	Things were better in the days when people stayed with one organisation for most of their careers					
24	I do not think that wanting to be a "company man" is sensible anymore					