Work-Family Conflict and Absenteeism in Selected Hotels in Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria

Ugo Chuks OKOLIE¹, Aghogho Victory IGHRHOHWUNU²
Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria¹
Department of Public Administration, Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi – Uku, Delta State, Nigeria²

Abstract. This study determined the effect of work-family conflict on workers absenteeism in selected hotels in Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria. A cross-sectional research design and convenience sampling technique were adopted. A questionnaire was employed as the research instrument for this study with 73 respondents deemed usable. Spillover theory was employed as the theoretical framework to guide the study. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results of the study revealed that work-family conflict and burnout have positive significant influence on workers’ absenteeism, while work-family balance has no significant effect on workers’ absenteeism in selected hotels in Abraka, Delta State. Thus, the study recommends among others that managers of hotels in Abraka should develop and implement, family-friendly policies such as flexi-time, compressed work week and dependent care assistance in order to eliminate or reduced both involuntary and voluntary absenteeism among the workers. This study was carried out to bridge the gap in knowledge about the influence of work-family conflict on workers’ absenteeism.

Keywords: work-family conflict; work-family balance; absenteeism; spillover theory.

JEL Classification: M12, O32, L31

Article History. Received January, 2022. Revised March, 2022. Accepted June, 2022

Corresponding Author. ugoookolie3@gmail.com, victory4joy2005@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

Workers who put work ahead of family are expected to experience work-family conflict. In recent times, economic, socio-cultural, legal institutional and technological factors influence work-family conflict. Changes in demographics and workforce are behind the move to embrace family-friendly policies. The decline of the traditional family, increase in dual-career couples and increases in the number of single parents bond an organisation to be concern for their workers. According to Boral and Bhargava (2009:54), “organisations and today bond to provide family-friendly policies for their employees. These practices are innovative, strategic, crucial and progressive in motivating workers’ attachment with an organisation, job satisfaction and reduce absenteeism”. Diab and Suifan (2016:100) pointed out that “a popular mediator that has gained spotlight in work-life balance literature in work-life balance literature is work-family conflict where researchers attempted to discover practices that mitigate the conflict employees under o balancing the demands of their work and person lives”.

Work-family conflict is “a form of inter-responsibility conflict in which the demands of work and family responsibilities are incompatible in some respect, so that participation in one domain is more difficult because participation in the other domain” (Carlson, Kaemar, Wayne &Grzywacz, 2006:315). “The implications of conflicting work and personal life responsibilities for people management and work structures are wider ranging” (McCarthy, Darcy & Grady, 2010:159). Aryasri and Babu (2009:69) argued that work-family conflict is “often manifested in a range of physical and psychological strains in an employee”. To buttress the foregoing, Duxburg and Higgs (2009:24) posited that “work-family conflict is
associated with high stress, high burnout, high depression mood, workers low satisfaction and perceived physical health challenges”. Barik and Pandy (2017:18) pointed out that “absence from work is strongly linked to work-family conflict. High work demands and onerous work expectations reduced employees’ level of job satisfaction”.

Furthermore, De-Clercq Rahman and Haq (2017:1168) argued that “the conflicts in work-life balance of working women affects their health and report more work-related stress, headaches, muscle tension, weight gains and depression than their male counterparts”. In Nigeria today, the main problem faced by most hostels is the high rate of attrition. As Berkery, Morley, Teirnan and Peretz (2020:3) rightly point out, “employees” inability to deal with the demands of work and home may manifest itself in the form of increased absenteeism, talent loss and turnover. Hospitality industry is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in Nigeria and majority of the managers in hospitality industry do not have the knowledge of the effect of work-family conflict on employees’ attrition rates. This study therefore attempts to assess the causal link between work-family conflict and absenteeism in selected hotels in Abraka, Delta State.

Work-Family Conflict
The term “work-family conflict” emerged in 1980s (Barnett, Gareis & Brennan, 1999) and denoted as “a form of inter-role conflict which arises due to mutually incompatibility in terms of role at work and family” (Choo, Desa & Asaari, 2016:24). Similarly, Nasimiyu and Egessa (2021:461) sees work-family conflict as “a form of inter-role conflict in which role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible, because participation in one role is made more difficult by virtues of participation in the other”.

According to Mark, 1977 cited in Choo et al. (2016:24) “perception of work and family as separate entities that compete for attention, time and energy has led to a constant feeling of tension and conflict. Work-family conflict can increase in a situation where work interferes acutely with family roles, especially for employees’ with responsibilities towards being a care-provider”. A clear example is a male worker who has just become a father of new born baby and want to spend time with his family, but his manager stresses him with project and work deadlines, the male worker is going to suffer to intensify work-family conflict.

To increase profitability and achieve competitive edge, many organisations have streamlined their workforce considerably with consequently posed a challenge to the attraction and retention of highly valued workers very difficult in recent times. This situation, coupled with the growth complexity of working environment and re-engineering of work processes has imposed work-overload on workers leading to work-family conflict. Boyar, Maertz, Pearson and Keogh (2003:179) pointed out that “work-family conflict has been consistently linked to negative outcomes for employees, their families and organisations. For example, work interference with family life has been associated with job dissatisfactions, turnover intention, general well-being, psychological strain, psychiatric disorders and substance abuse and drinking problems. Workers reporting high level of work-family conflict “tend to exhibit lower levels of job satisfaction, organisational performance and commitment” (Beauregard, 2016:246).

Work-family is a common source of burnout. According to Langballe, Innstrand, Aasland and Falkum (2011:74) refer to burnout as “a stress-related psychological syndrome in which exhaustion and disengagement may be considered the core elements. It is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment at work and at home”. A high level of job burnout causes workers to fee depressed and experience a sense of failure fatigue and a loss of motivation, which in turn can lead to a
number of challenges for the organisations such as workers’ turnover, attrition, reduced organisational commitment, job satisfaction, productivity and workers’ morale (Choi, Cheong & Feinber, 2012). Thus, the practice or work-family balance aim at reducing the conflict between work and family domains.

**Work-Family Balance**

Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw (2003:511) defined work-family balance as “the degree to which a person is fairly taken part in and contented with his/her work and non-work elements”. Similarly, Talip, Hassan, Kasa, Sabil and Ibrahim (2021:274) sees work-family balance as “the balance between work roles and non-work roles such as family, community, religion, studies and leisure”. Chepkemoi (2021:154) argued that work-family balance “affects the psychological, economical, mental and social well-being of a worker. All these effects are noticed in workers attitude, behaviour, well-being and output in their workplace”. Greenhaus et al. (2003:515) proposed “three components of work-family balance which include: (1) Time balance an equal amount of time devoted to work and family roles, (2) involvement balance- an equal level of psychological involvement in work and family roles and (3) satisfaction balance- an equal level of satisfaction with work and family roles”.

Work-family balance is a mechanism or HR strategy for nurturing positive energy amongst workers. Yasbek, 2004 cited in Barik and Pandy (2017:20) identified “the benefits of work-family balance policies to include improved recruitment and selection rates, with associated cost savings, reduced absenteeism and sick leave usage; a reduction in workers’ stress and improvements in workers satisfaction and loyalty, greater flexibility for business operating hours, improved productivity and enhance corporate image. But implementing work-family balance policies include direct costs such as parental leave payments or providing equipment to tele-commuters and indirect cost associated with temporarily filling the posts of absentees and temporary reductions in productivity arising from disruptions”. Furthermore, Beayuregard and Lesly (2009:18) concluded that “work-family balance practices are effective in enhancing organisational performance, searching good job seekers and a committed worker”. A work-family balance policy has the potential to affect important workplace issues such as stress, turnover, burnout and absenteeism.

**Absenteeism**

Absenteeism is a habitual pattern of absence from a duty or obligation in the workplace without a valid reason. Habitual non-presence at work extends beyond what is deemed to be within an acceptable realm of days away from office or work for legitimate causes such as scheduled vacations, occasional illness and family emergencies. According to Nguyen, Groth and Johnson (2016:616) pointed out that “employee absences are both costly and disruptive for business. The economic costs associated with employees’ absenteeism are staggering with estimates in the United States of up to 40 Billion Dollars per year”. Mudaly and Nkosi (2015:625) highlights “the complexity of absenteeism by citing family matters, lack of motivation to attend work, illness, finance, favouritism, unfriendly managers, long working hours, increased workload, unsatisfactory work conditions, lack of equipment, unfair promotions, staff shortages, lack of a reward system and in coherent decision-making as factors influencing absenteeism in workplace”.

In today’s competitive labour market where the attraction and retention of valued workers is difficult, it is important for organisations to identify potential causes of attrition to ensure the most appropriate means of addressing the issue of absenteeism in the workplace.
The study was anchored on spillover theory. The theory which could be attributed to Staines (1980) is “the most popularly used in work-family balance studies when investigating the relationship between work-family domains” (Bello & Tanko, 2020:221). According to Edwards and Rothbard (2000:190), spillover refers to “the effects of work and family on each other and is described in terms of affect (Mood and Satisfaction), values (important of work and family) and skills. It has also be termed as extension, generalisation, isomorphism, likeness, continuation, familiarity, similarity and persistence” Morris and Madsen (2007:442) argued that “spillover theory can be either positive or negative. Positive spillover refers to the fact that satisfaction and achievement in one domain may bring along satisfaction and achievement in another domain, while negative spillover refers to the fact that difficulties and depression in one domain may bring along the same emotion in another domain”. According to Staines (1980:113), spillover is “a positive relationship between work and family, hence, positive work experience would be associated with positive family experiences and negative work experiences would be associated with negative family experience. This is because work and family function as an entity”. For example, employees’ joyful experiences at work such as promotion or the feelings of elation once a project is completed can be passed on to the family life and positive family life experiences can enhance workplace positive outcomes. A similar situation would be for a worker going through marital challenge may experience negative emotions and the quality of his/her work might be affected. Thus, in spillover theory, “there is no boundary between the workplace and home. What happens at work will also happen at home” (Young & Kleiner, 1992:25).

Researchers have criticized the theory as shown in review articles of Doby and Caplan (1995) and Williams and Alliger (1995). Doby and Caplan (1995:117) looked at spillover “with the perspective of a threat to the reputation of the work-family balance. They hypothesized that a worker experiencing emotional distress because of loss of a good reputation or unfavourable criticism by the supervisor or co-worker could bring negative emotions from the workplace to the family domain”. Also, Willains and Alliger (1994:230) “took a sample of working parents and found that negative moods spilled more easily than positive moods over the course of the day”.

However, spillover theory is the most popular stance adopted by scholars assessing work and family domains and it is also the theory with the most supporting evidence when examining the relationship between work-family conflict and employee attrition rates (Nguyen et al. 2016). From the foregoing, the spillover theory is sacrosanct to this study because it’s focused on the issue at hand. This is in line with the work-family conflict and absenteeism. If there is work-family conflict, it shows that there is negative spillover because challenges and despair in work affect the same emotion in family life that would result to workers’ attrition and vice versa. The effects of work-family conflict and work-family balance on absenteeism are in line with the tenets of the spillover theory. In supporting the foregoing, viewpoint, Taneja (2015:55) argued that “work family balance practices improve employees’ moral, retain talent and reduce absenteeism”.

Greenhaus et al. (2003”:513) pointed out that “individuals who were more engaged in work than family activities experienced the highest level of work-family conflict and stress. Grnfeld, Zitzelsberger, Coristine, Whelan, Aspelund and Evans (2004:63) in a rate study of work stress amongst cancer workers, argued that “a major source of job stress is work-family conflict coupled with heavy workload demand”. Work stress has been shown to be positively associated with absenteeism and turnover among clinicians (Mudaly & Nkosi, 2015). Kocakulah, Kelley, Mitchell and Ruggieri (2018:89) asserted that “personal illness, family
and work-related conflicts are cited as significant factors in explaining unplanned absences from work”. 

Latorre, Guest, Ramos and Gracia (2016:330) argued that “from workers viewpoint, work-family balance generates values and benefits by allowing workers flexibility around when work are completed, making it easier to coordinate their work and non-work commitments. The desire to return this benefit (in this instance perceived level of autonomy) should lead to a decrease in absenteeism as workers would be centicised to attend work if at all possible”. That is, benefits generated by work-family balance for workers will create a sense of duty towards the organisation and will create a sense of duty towards the organisation and as a result, workers attrition rate will reduce.Kalliath, Kalliath, Chan and Chan (2019:250) study revealed that “social workers’ job well-being and job satisfaction are negatively affected by frequently experienced stress from competing in work and family domains”.

In Auerbach’s (1990) study of an American hospital’s childcare programme, absenteeism rates dropped from 6% to 1% among eligible parents following the introduction of the childcare center whereas absenteeism rates for other workers remained steady at 4%. Several researchers support the notion that attrition rates can be influence by work-family balance practices in the workplace. Hughes and Bozionelos (2007:147) argued that “work-family balance programmes increased workers” loyalty and commitment to the organisation, reduced absenteeism and turnover, reduced conflict between work and family life and as a result increased productivity of male workers”. Nasimiyu and Egessa (2021:463) affirmed that “the tangible benefits of work-family balance include reduced of absenteeism, lower stress levels; higher levels of productivity and performance; greater quality of life; satisfaction and commitment. In their study, Chandola, Martikainen, Bartley, Lahema, Marmot and Michikazu (2004) found that work-family conflict increased absenteeism, turnover, job dissatisfaction, reduced marital and family satisfaction, physical and mental well-being including burnout and other health challenges. Schaufeli and Enzman (1998:13) “linked burnout to lower levels of organisational effectiveness, job satisfaction, organisation commitment as well as higher levels of absenteeism and turnover”.

Based on the literature review, below objectives and hypotheses were formulated for the study. Objectives of the Study (1) To examine the influence of work-family conflict on absenteeism in the workplace; (2) To determine the effect of work-family balance on absenteeism in the workplace; (3) To assess the impact of burnout on absenteeism in the workplace.The hypothesis of the study (1) Work-family conflict has significant influence on absenteeism in the work place; (2) Work-family balance has significant effect on absenteeism in the workplace; (3) Burnout has significant impact on absenteeism in the workplace.

METHOD
The study adopted cross-sectional research design. 92 workers of Bisyl Hotel & Suites, (20), Grand Cuba Hotel & Suites (14), Executive Hotel & Suites (18), Tovikris Hotel and Suites (12), Frendies Hotel & Suites (8), Petoceanic Hotel & Suites (11) and Rehobothview Hotel (9) in Abraka, Delta State constituted the population of this study. For the purpose of this study and to achieve a reliable result, the questionnaire was administered among the managers and workers of the selected hotels using non probability sampling technique. The questionnaire items were adopted from the literature, while an initial pilot study of 20 workers without replacement was carried out to establish the study reliability and validity using Smart PLS Criterion.
Table 1: Validity and Reliability Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Composite Reliability</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>Average Variance Extract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work-family conflict</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.851</td>
<td>0.783</td>
<td>0.618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-family balance</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.873</td>
<td>0.770</td>
<td>0.593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absenteeism</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.809</td>
<td>0.738</td>
<td>0.621</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 1 shows that the values range from 0.809 to 0.783 for composite reliability and 0.593 to 0.62 for Cronbach’s alpha respectively for the three constructs. This implies that all the constructs are reliable as the values of composite and the Crombach’s alpha coefficients are above the threshold of 0.70 (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2017). The reliability results are supported by the discriminant validity values of Average Variance Extract (AVE), which are also above the standard of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2017).

Therefore, all the three constructs for this study showed high reliability and internal consistency. The socio-demographic characteristics were analysed using descriptive statistics, while the hypotheses of the study were analysed using inferential statistics of correlation and multiple regression analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 23.0. Out of the 92 questionnaire administered, only 73 were retrieved and used for data analysis, given us a 79% of response rate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results and discussion of this study is shown below starting with the overview of the socio-demographic characteristics.

Table 2: Socio-demographic Characteristics Result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>38.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51+</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 provides an overview of the socio-demographic data. Out of the 73 respondents, 27(37.0%) were male and 46(63.0%) were female. This implies that the majority of the respondents were female. In terms of age range, the average age of the respondents was between 20-30 years. Most of the respondents were single, majority of the respondents had SSCE while on average, a maximum number of 11 hours was spent at work by majority of respondents. This implies that the majority of the respondents spent 55 hours a week engaging in paid job. Working 55 hours a week contradicts the Nigeria labour Act of 2014 that defines an appropriate maximum of 40 to 48 working hours per week for each worker.

Table 3 revealed that there was a positive and significant relationship between work-family conflict and absenteeism (r = 0.529, n = 73, p = 0.025). Therefore, the greater the level of conflict between work and family responsibilities, the greater the level of absenteeism in the workplace; the result also showed that there was no relationship between work-family balance and absenteeism (r = -0.241, n = 73, p = 0.007). This implies that the greater the balance between work and family domains, the lesser the level of absenteeism among the hotels’ workers. Finally, the result revealed that there was a positive and significant relationship between burnout and absenteeism (r=0.366, n=73, p = 0.073). This implies that the probability that absenteeism will increase when burnout increase is true.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSCE</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCE/OND</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Sc/HND</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBA/M.Sc</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average working hours per day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field survey, 2022
The multiple regression results showed that work-family conflict, work-family balance and burnout explain 26.3% variation of absenteeism among hotels workers in Abraka, Delta State. The overall model is significant (F = 12.103, p< 0.05). In terms of the influence of each independent variable on absenteeism, the model revealed that work-family conflict significantly exert positive influence on absenteeism among hotels’ workers (B = 0.81, p <0.05), thus, hypothesis one was accepted. Work-family balance had no significant influence on absenteeism among hotels workers (B = 0.053, p<0.05), thus, hypothesis two was rejected. The model also revealed that burnout had positive significant influence on absenteeism among hotels workers (B = 0.610, p <0.05). Therefore, hypothesis was accepted.

The study clearly showed that in general there are more female workers than male workers in the study, majority of the workers were between the ages of 20-30 years, most of the workers were single, majority of the workers had SSCE (Ordinary O-level degree) or Secondary School Certificate Examination degree and most of the workers spent 11 hours at work. The study also revealed that work-family conflict and burnout have positive and strong significant correlations with absenteeism in selected hotels in Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria. This finding is in line with previous studies (Mudaly & Nkosi, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2016). This study showed that work-family balance had a negative relationship with absenteeism.

This finding corroborates with the findings of Berkery et al. (2020) study. There were three hypotheses formulated for this study and the result of hypothesis one was supported by the findings of Greenhaus et al. (2003) and Grunfeld et al. (2004) which revealed the influence of work-family conflict on employees’ absenteeism. In hypothesis two, the study showed that work-family balance had no significant influence on workers absenteeism in selected hotels in Abraka, Delta State. This finding is not in line with Dev and Mano-Raj (2017) study which revealed that work-family balance had significant effect on the rate of absenteeism among bank staff in India. The third hypothesis was supported by Schaufeli and Enzman (1998) study which showed that burnout significantly influenced employees’ absenteeism in organisation.

CONCLUSION
In recent times, there has been growing interest in studying the determinants and consequences of work-family conflict, but there have not been many studies on workers absenteeism in hotels in developing countries like Nigeria. This study was carried out to bridge the gap in knowledge about the influence of work-family conflict on workers’ absenteeism. The inability to balance work and family domains in the face of work intensification was linked to workers’ absenteeism by this study results. In addition to its direct financial costs (e.g., overtime costs, replacement costs and statutory sick pay), absenteeism can lower workers’ productivity and group performance.

Absenteeism can reflect a lack of workers’ satisfaction and commitment to the organisation; thus, by realizing the effect of work-family conflict on workers’ absenteeism, hospitality industry should development and implement family-friendly policies such as
flexi-time, compressed work policies such as flexi-time, compressed work week, dependent care assistance (childcare arrangements and Creche) and teleworking if possible in order to eliminate or reduced both involuntary and voluntary absenteeism among the workers. Also, managers of hotels in Abraka, Delta State should desist from unethical behaviour such as abusive treatment, unfair treatment, and breach of trust and manipulation that may encourage workers’ counterproductive behavior such as absenteeism, lateness, turnover intention and actual turnover.

Like most studies, this study has some limitations, and more research would be useful to verify the findings of this study. A convenience sampling method was employed to select participants, so the results of this study cannot be generalized. Also, the study was restricted to only seven hotels in Abraka, Delta State; the results might not be the same to other hotels in Delta State or across the country. Therefore, further similar study may be conducted among workers in other hotels in Delta State in order to verify the objective of this study.

REFERENCES


