

WOMEN EMPLOYMENT AND FAMILY STABILITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The issues are on the relationship between employment and married women in jobs outside the home and the stability of the family. Specifically the analysis is on the effects of wife's employment on: the number of children a couple will have, the number of hours spent by a working wife on childcare and housework, the incidence of juvenile delinquency in the family, authority relations (decision making) between husband and wife, the role strain and conflict, satisfaction/ dissatisfaction in marriage. The issues looked at equally the relationship between wife's employment/educational level and propensity towards marital breakup.

Keywords: Women Employment, Family and Family Stability.

Introduction

Studies have shown that the number of married women in the workforce has increased over the past three decades and is, in fact, still on the increase. This situation found in developed countries is equally true for developing nations as noted by Becker, Landes and Michael (1977) among others. The increase has been related to a number of factors which are: increase in the numbers of educated women and the opportunities for earning income outside the home. Women are also working to be economically independent and to be able to support their families. Some of these women work for psychological reasons, for instance, to have a sense of fulfillment. The concept of working wife is not new to the traditional Nigerian or even West African societies, where every woman is expected to be engaged in one form of economic activity or the other, or at least, in farm work. This is in addition to the normal household tasks and rearing of children. The point here is that married women in traditional or contemporary society who run their own businesses have the flexibility of adjusting work relations and domestic obligations with minimum of role conflict. The involvement of women in work outside the home and under a rigid work-time schedule, does not allow for this flexibility in adjusting work and domestic obligations. Thus, conflict and other problems are believed to be present in the families where the wife is engaged in outside employment, leading to family disorganization which does not augur well for the stability of the family.

The issue of working wives has become a permanent feature in almost all parts of the world. Cook (1975) confirmed this increasing trend in woman's employment in her survey of working mothers in a number of countries. Mostly noted in her work is that working mothers the world

over are faced with the problem of combining wage labour and their traditional work. The issue here is that wage labour with domestic tasks revolves around a bureaucratic circle with rigid work time schedules and authority structure. This show that working wives are faced with the problem of managing their two roles of worker and mother, which contradict the demands on time and energy of working wife.

That women actually go through a lot of stress, strain and conflict in an attempt to cope with their multiple roles has been noted in so many studies (Beck 1992; Becker 1981; Bloom, Kretschmer and Van Reenen 2006; Bukodi and Robert 2003; Crompton 2002). Noted is that women who are engaged in work outside the home are involved in double burden of work and childcare at home. The identification went further to observe that the attendant strain and conflict of managing many roles affect not only the woman but also the other members of the family.

Specifically, some negative effects of mothers' employment on young children have been noted. Such children are identified to be deprived of parental care and love which are important for their development at this early stage of lives (Cooke 2006; Benneth 2002; Chan and Halpin 2002; Deutsch 2007).

Other issues involved in wife's employment is that wife's earnings could actually be a threat to her husband's traditional authority position as head of the family while enhancing the wife's position in terms of family decision making. Yet the present economic situation in Nigeria makes it imperative that married women in Nigeria must work if only to augment their husbands' income. Still there are great case that marital instability is more in working-wife families than in those of full-time housewives (Fagan and Walthery 2007; Hakim 2000; Gambles, Lewis and Rapoport 2006).

Employment and childcare/domestic (housework) roles

Studies have been done on the effects of wives' employment on childcare and domestic roles. This earlier studies focused attention on effects of mother's absence from home on the children. Although there were identifiable inconsistencies in the findings, it was discovered that maternal employment had a deleterious effect on the development of the children. In short, separation of children from mothers was discovered to have 'bad psychological, physical and social effects upon the children and can be permanently damaging to their personalities' (Perry, 1961:312). Stolz's (1960) study which is considered very old also discovered that outside the home that;

1. Mothers are usually tired, impatient and irritable;
2. Children are lonely when mothers are tired and busy; that is, children feel lonely when mothers are too tired to give them due attention;
3. Children feel neglected and are actually neglected
4. Children run riot without supervision;
5. Mothers cannot share school experiences with their children;
6. Mothers cannot do the mending and other services children need;
7. Mothers cannot teach children socially approved behavior.

Although stolz did not point out that these conclusions were not backed by empirical evidence, there is no denying the validity of some of them. For instance, Cooke (2007) ; Crompton (2002) ; Drobic, Blossfeld and Rohwer (1999) ; Fagan and Walthery (2007); and a host other researchers noted some of the above-mentioned influences on children, but most importantly, they stressed the cost to the mothers themselves, like health problems.

In a study carried out selected places in Europe and United States by Hakim (1997); Gambles, Lewis and Raport (2006) and Hakim (2000), a positive association was found between the employment of wives and infant mortality. In other words, high rate of women's participation

in labour force leads to high death rate for children. According to these authors, child rearing, being a labour intensive activity requires considerable investment in mother's time, and so, having an outside employment reduces the amount of time available to the mother for childcare. This increases the possibility of child accidents and possible deaths.

Employment and Marital Satisfaction

The problem of contradiction in findings found in the areas already reviewed is equally present in the relationship between wives' employment and marital satisfaction of both spouses. For instance, Burke and Weir (1976); Hakim (1997); Gambles, Lewis and Raport (2006) found that employed wives were in better physical and emotional health and were also happier (more satisfied) with their marriage than their non-employed counterparts. They also identified that husbands of employed wives were in poorer health and were less contented with their marriage than men whose wives were full-time housewives. Their conclusion was that wives' employment contributed to marital discord and stress experienced by the husbands through the reduction of the amount of personal care they (husbands) received, increasing their responsibilities for childcare and other "women's work", and generally eroding their central position in the family.

In contrast, Zimmerman, Skinner and Birner (1980); Crompton (2002); Fagan and Walthery (2007) found no relationship between work/career involvement of women and marital satisfaction. That is to say that a wife's job has little effect on the marital discord and stress experienced by the husband. In fact, Crompton found that husbands whose wives were employed enjoyed a happier marriage and are under less stress than those whose wives were full-time housewives. This is because the extra income and greater personal fulfillment the wives (and possibly the husbands) eventually enjoy far out-weigh the short term disadvantages wives' employment might bring to the family.

Employment, Authority Relations and Role Conflict in the Family

There is need to investigate to view the effects of the employment of wives on the authority (power) relations between husbands and wives, which is one of the assumed major sources of conflict. While Hoffman (1960); Bukodi (2003) viewed authority as the extent to which one parent decides over the other parent's behaviour more than the other way round, Darendorf (1959); Jumotte (2003) viewed it as a legitimate relation of domination and subjection which extracts compliance from the person in a subordinate position. Authority structure within African families is based on norms which clearly legitimize the husband's position as head of the family and thus requires that respect and difference be accorded him (Kayonge-Male et al 1986; Hakim 2000). Power/authority involves making decisions which may have important effects on others.

Sudarkasa (1981); Hakim (1997 & 2000) on their general analysis on African societies summarized her observations on decision making in the family, that: husband assumes responsibility for certain domains within the household while the wife or wives assume responsibility for others. Thus , studies on African societies do not seem to find such a straight forward relationship between wife's employment and increased share in decision making.

Conflict in roles arising from the multiple roles of a woman is said to lead not only to social and psychological problems for different family members, but is capable of contributing to coronary disease on the part of the wife (Sales 1969; Hakim 2000). The conflict a working woman experiences between her employer's expectations as a worker and her children's expectations as a mother (inter role conflict) is greater than the disagreement she may have experienced within the set of expectations her children may have of her as a mother (intra role conflict). Hall (1972); Hakim (2000) noted that there is nothing wrong with a mother's

employment per se, that is disturbing to the children, but that she may be working during the time they would prefer her to spend at home with them.

Conclusion

Some of the discoveries on working wives and family stability indicate that association between female employment and risk of marital disruption is yet to be decided because of varying cases arising from concluded studies. Although there is good indication that female employment has strong disruptive effect on marriage. For Nigeria and some other developing areas, there is strong indication that there clear case of traditional family and gender roles. Since there are no concluding angle to the issues raised, we need to understand that there no clear effects to mothers employment and family total disruptions, but there is bound to identify that effects of mothers outside work participation might lead to other issues that might affect the child's proper upbringing and positive moral conduct. On one hand there might be a case of delinquency because absence from the family, but this cannot be attributed to working wives as the case of self-employed wife could exhibit a related trend. On general case, parents need to show commitment to censoring the type of films their children watch, the companies they keep and generally their movement. Generally also, marriage workshops should be organized at the community, local churches and organizations to raise issues on work, marriage and family balance and related issues. At this level counseling should be introduced to help and invigorate couples whose marital spirits are low. The government need to help on providing daycare centres to help to help mothers in stabilizing their children and family issues.

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